NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

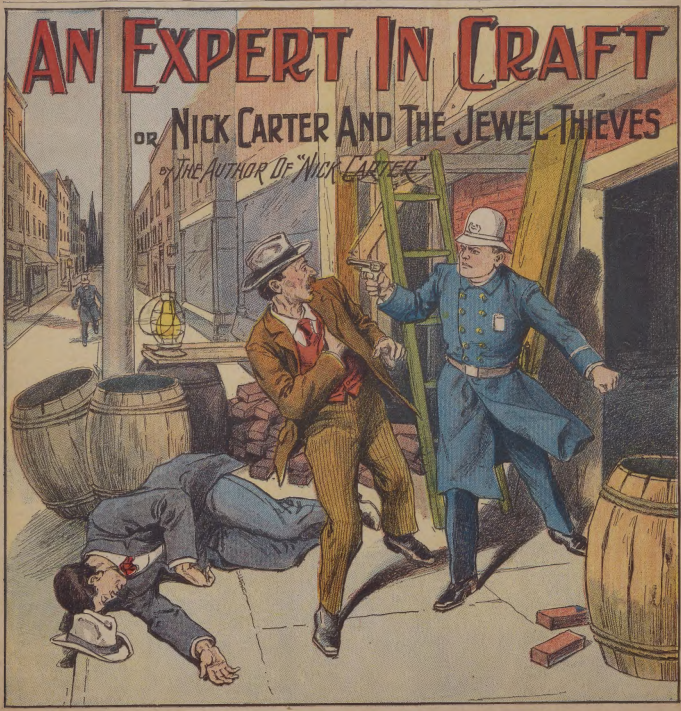
Issued Weekly. By subscription $2.50 per year. Entered as Second-class Matter at the N. Y. Post Office, by STREET & SMITH, 79-89 Seventh Ave., N. Y.

No. 473 NEW YORK, JANUARY 20, 1906. Price, Five Cents

AN EXPERT IN CRAFT

OR NICK CARTER AND THE JEWEL THIEVES

BY THE AUTHOR OF "NICK CARTER"



The assassin's right hand was concealed under his coat and against his breast when he turned to face Nick Carter in disguise, who, with pistol pointed, commanded him to throw up his hands.

NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

Issued Weekly. By subscription $2.50 per year. Entered as Second-class Matter at the N. Y. Post Office, by STREET & SMITH, *79-89 Seventh Avenue, N. Y. Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1906, in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C.*

No. 473. NEW YORK, January 20, 1906. Price Five Cents.

An Expert in Craft;

OR,

NICK CARTER AND THE JEWEL THIEVES.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

A QUEER TRANSACTION.

"What do you think of the view, Nick?"

"It is 'out of sight,' as the boys would say."

"A pertinent paradox. And—do you look upon me as a crank?"

"Far from it. Your money-grubbing neighbors, with their eyes on the ground, and their hands on their purses, may sneer at you, talk sarcastically of your extravagance, and shake their heads as you pass, but all that need not disturb you. Knowing that you are in a class above them, that your broader, more cultivated mind can find abundant delight in things beyond their comprehension, you can afford to smile at the dull, coarse misunderstanding of your actions and your motives."

Nick Carter laughed, and Darrell Denton, retired merchant, amateur scientist, and liberal-minded student in the school of world affairs, looked pleased.

The two friends were standing on the top of a high tower recently erected on ground belonging to Denton, near Elizabeth, New Jersey. The tower was not built against the handsome, artistically appointed cottage where Denton resided, but occupied a position several hundred feet from the building, and at the back of a log cabin which the owner called his den.

The great detective had known Denton many years, and had conceived for the retired merchant a warm and lasting friendship. He had come this day to Denton's country home for the purpose of seeing the sights offered by the erection of the tower.

Denton had a pair of fine field-glasses, and Nick had been using them. With their aid he had swept the inner portion of the bay of New York, and, after answering his friend's question, had wheeled and was now taking in the stretch of grassy country south of Elizabeth.

After moving the glasses several times, Nick held them for many moments leveled on one spot. "By George!"

he exclaimed, "something sensational is happening down the road. I believe it is a robbery."

"What do you see?" asked Denton in some excitement.

"There is a hollow in the road about a mile from here. First, I saw two men, one tall and one short, come through a field from the opposite direction, sneak down to the road, and hide behind a pile of rock. They had hardly secreted themselves before two other men in a buggy drove into the hollow from the direction of Elizabeth. The buggy was stopped by the pair who had been in hiding, and a struggle followed. It is still progressing." Nick handed the glasses to Denton. "Come, we must try to catch the robbers."

"Which way are they pointing?"

"This way. They have tied up the two men who came from Elizabeth, and are now using the horse and buggy to further their escape."

Nick and Denton hurried down the stairs, and in Denton's motor-car sped along the road in the direction of the hollow.

Expecting to meet the rig driven by the fleeing robbers, the detective and his friend were surprised and disappointed to find the road clear of vehicles.

The explanation was easy to arrive at. The robbers had taken one of the many intersecting roads, but which one could not be determined, as the rig was nowhere in sight.

They were seen at the hollow.

Tied to a telegraph-pole was one of the victims. The other lay bound upon the ground.

Both were well-dressed, and bore the appearance of being honest business men.

One of them, the elder, was so greatly excited that when Nick asked him what had occurred he let fall an oath, and then dashed up the incline in the direction taken by the robbers. The detective called to him to stop, but he paid not the slightest attention to the command, and was soon out of sight.

Nick turned to the other man, who stood gazing up the incline with a queer smile on his face.

"I was a witness to the robbery," said the detective. "What was stolen?"

"Nothing."

Nick regarded the speaker in astonishment. Was the man daft? Looking through the field-glasses from the top of the tower, Nick had seen the robbers take from the person of one of the victims a package of some sort. And there were all the elements of robbery, for the two men who had come in the buggy had been assaulted, and, upon being overcome, had been bound, as if to prevent an alarm.

The man, who was pleasant-voiced, and had keen eyes, which looked the detective squarely in the face, noted Nick's expression and quickly explained.

"The persons who held us up where thieves all right, but they failed to get what they were after."

"Oh! I begin to see."

The man grinned. "We had a tip of what was in the wind and we fooled them."

"We?" repeated Nick, whose brain was now working rapidly. "Your partner did not act as if he had fooled anybody."

The man's countenance flushed slightly. "I made an incorrect statement," he said. "My partner was in the dark. It was I who fooled them."

Denton now put in a word.

"Hadn't you better tell the whole story?" he suggested. "The case seems to be a queer one. You may speak freely. My name is Denton, and I reside near here. My friend is Mr. Nicholas Carter, the celebrated detective."

Nick would have preferred that the announcement of his identity should come from himself, and at his own, selected time, but he exhibited no annoyance when Denton spoke. Perhaps, after all, it were well that the stranger should at once know him for what he was.

"Mr. Carter!" the man exclaimed in a tone of mingled delight and surprise. "I am glad to meet you." He extended his hand, which Nick grasped.

Then the stranger shook hands with Denton. He was now in fine spirits, and told his story frankly and easily.

"My name is Austin Blunt," he began, "and I am the confidential agent of Benoni Zacary, the Broadway jeweler. A few days ago Colonel Bodwin, the retired railway magnate, whose residence, as you must be aware, is about a mile beyond this spot, came into the store and selected articles of jewelry, amounting in value to sixty thousand dollars, which he designed as a present for his daughter, who is soon to be married to Count Wallenberg."

"The marriage will take place next week," said Denton to Nick.

"The delivery was to be made to-day, and I was selected by the proprietor as the custodian of the jewels. Julius Opping, the clerk, who has been in the employ of Zacary for several years, was to be my companion.

"Two hours before we started I was called to the phone to talk with a man in Elizabeth. He said he was an officer, and he imparted the astounding information that a plot to steal the jewels had been concocted, and that the hold-up would take place in the hollow, which was perfectly described. The officer urged me to make no change in the arrangements, but to come on as if I had received no warning, and leave the rest to him. He would be prepared, he assured me, to arrest the robbers in the act. I asked him how he had obtained the information about the projected hold-up, and he said he had overheard a conversation between the thieves while he occupied one room of a lodging-house and the thieves another. In conclusion, he requested me to say nothing respecting the tip he had given me, as he desired to make the arrests and secure all the credit. He would be on hand amply prepared to foil the plot. It did not seem possible

that the man could be a fraud, and so I made the promise. He was all right, as results have proven, for nothing has been lost. The plot has been smashed."

Nick said nothing in reply. There was an inscrutable expression on his face.

"I was fully instructed as to my part in the game. As the officer wished to arrest the robbers with the supposed plunder in their hands, he suggested that I make up two packages, the external appearance of each to be the same. One was to contain the jewels, and the other was to be a dummy. I followed instructions. The fake package I showed to Opping as the genuine one. The other, the package of value, I placed in my undershirt pocket, which I had put on when I purchased the garment.

"When we started out this morning Opping supposed that the jewels reposed in the package in an inner pocket of my coat. The robbers must have entertained a like supposition, for that was the package which was stolen. You now understand, Mr. Carter, why Opping went off in such a hurry. He thought that a robbery had actually been committed. I would have eased his mind if I had felt sure when he started to leave that you and Mr. Denton could be trusted."

"As it is," remarked Denton, "Mr. Opping will have a little exercise, which won't harm him any."

"Precisely," assented Blunt. "He will have a wild-goose chase, and will meet with a surprise when he returns."

Nick, who had been looking soberly at the ground, now said: "After you talked with the Elizabeth officer, Mr. Blunt, did you remain in the store until you left with the two packages?"

"No, I went out shortly afterward and returned about half-an-hour before starting with Opping for the ferry."

"Another question: Are you sure that the man you talked with was at the Elizabeth end of the phone?"

Blunt stared hard at the speaker. "I took his word for it," he answered.

As the words left his mouth the figure of Opping could be seen at the top of the incline. In a few moments he appeared before the men in the hollow. He was out of breath and in an abominable temper.

"Why didn't you come with me?" he gasped in a rage as he faced Blunt. "You are a better runner than I am, and you might have seen which way they went."

"I had no call to leave here," said the confidential agent quietly. "There has been nothing of value stolen. The jewels are safe in my pocket."

Opping gazed at Blunt in dumb amazement.

"No robbery?" he said, as he passed a trembling hand over his face. "I—I don't understand."

Blunt, with every evidence of satisfaction, explained how he had outwitted the plotters.

Opping's face cleared instantly.

"I'll let you feast your eyes on the jewels," said Blunt, "and then we will pursue our journey, if Mr. Denton will kindly grant the use of his auto."

"I shall be pleased to take you to the colonel's house," responded Denton quickly.

"Thank you."

Blunt opened his waistcoat, unbuttoned his undershirt, and from a pocket on the inner side drew out a small yet heavy package. Opping's eyes glistened as he looked upon it.

It was opened carefully and the contents were seen by all the persons present.

One glance, and then Opping turned on Blunt with an outrush of violent speech.

"You—you fool!" he shouted. "You have been playing for time with this cock-and-bull story. The thieves have got the jewels, and you knew it all the time, you scoundrel."

Zacary's confidential agent paid small attention to this outburst. He stood staring blankly at the opened package. Instead of the precious stones which Colonel Bodwin had contracted to purchase, the package contained a handful of chopped pieces of lead.

In a word, Blunt held in his hand the dummy, and the genuine package had been stolen.

CHAPTER II.

THE MYSTERY DEEPENS.

Nick Carter's voice was stern as he addressed the astonished young man.

"I shall have to place you under arrest," he said. "Your peculiar words, and your still more peculiar actions, warrant the assumption that you were a party to the robbery."

Opping's black eyes gleamed with fierce pleasure. "Of course he is guilty," he said, with a snap of his heavy jaws. "It's as plain as a, b, c. To prison with him."

Austin Blunt sighed and hung his head.

"The case against me is a pretty black one," were his words, "but, all the same, I'm innocent. The story I told is the true one."

"Bah!" snorted Opping. "It's a yarn that wouldn't fool a five-year-old."

"No," assented Nick Carter; "it is utterly off color, and I am surprised, Mr. Blunt, that you should have supposed that any sensible man would accept it."

Opping nodded his head violently.

Blunt had no more to say. With downcast mien he allowed himself to be taken to the Elizabeth jail.

Nick Carter parted with Denton in the town, and Opping went on to New York to inform Zacary of the great loss he had sustained.

An hour after Blunt had been placed in a cell the door opened and the great detective entered.

The prisoner gave Nick a cool greeting.

Though he realized that the circumstantial evidence

against him was strong, he felt aggrieved that Nick Carter should so soon have made up his mind that he was guilty.

"If you have come to interview me," he said crossly, "I wish to let you know at once that I have nothing to say."

Nick received this statement with a smile. "It is very evident," he replied quietly, "that you have small knowledge of the methods of detectives."

Blunt did not respond. He was sitting on the edge of his bunk with his face in his hands and his eyes on the floor.

Nick took a seat by his side. "Blunt," said he pleasantly, "I deceived you awhile ago. I do not believe you to be guilty. On the contrary, I believe you told the truth and that you are an honest man."

The prisoner raised his head. There was a gulp in his throat as he tried to speak, though his eyes were sparkling.

"What do you say? Do you mean that you are with me?"

"Yes. The coils are about you, but I am going to try to remove them."

The man whose liberty was in jeopardy heard these words, observed the earnest expression on the great detective's strong, manly countenance, and his heart leaped in hope and confidence.

"I—I am awfully obliged to you, Mr. Carter," he said huskily. He would have said more, but Nick burst in with his explanation.

"If my identity had been unknown when Julius Opping made his appearance in the hollow I might not have coincided with his view of the case. As it was, I deemed it prudent to fall in with his ideas. I do not say he had a finger in the pie. My opinion regarding Mr. Opping must be reserved pending further information and discoveries."

Blunt looked thoughtful, but said nothing.

"If he was a party to the robbery," Nick went on, "he will find satisfaction in the reflection that I not only do not suspect him, but also am playing into his hand by assuming that you are the chief in the conspiracy to steal the jewels."

"Whoever the chief may be," said Blunt with a look of shame, "he must have sized me up for a fool."

"It is certain that you did not act with proper forethought and discretion," remarked Nick, with a shake of the head.

"I know it, but that was because I placed too much faith in the honesty of the person who warned me over the telephone."

Nick produced his cigar-case. After weeds had been lighted, he said:

"You acted hastily. Had you taken what you must now admit would have been necessary precaution, the jewels would not have been stolen, and the conspirators could have been caught. After receiving the warning over the phone, you should have had officers with you in the carriage. You should have placed some discount on the phone warning."

"I see. I acted like a chump. And my actions in the eyes of my employer and the public proclaim my guilt."

Blunt bowed his head and his face became gloomy again.

"You have learned a lesson which you are not likely to forget," Nick proceeded. "And now to business. How do you account for the substitution of packages?"

"I can't account for it. I am positive that I placed the dummy in my coat pocket and the genuine package in the secret pocket, and that they were each in place when I set out for the Jersey ferry."

"Assuming that you did have the jewels in the secret pocket when you left New York, then the removal and substitution must have taken place after you were assaulted by the robbers in the hollow. And to make that explanation stick I must be assured that for some moments after you were attacked you were unconscious."

"I was. I received a blow on the head which for a time took away my senses. The robbers had gone before I again opened my eyes."

"Did Opping receive the same rough treatment?"

"I don't know. I was pulled out of the buggy and struck on the head. I did not see how Opping was faring, and he never volunteered any explanation while we were bound and waiting for help."

"He did not talk much, then?"

"Omitting the swearing, no."

Nick was silent a moment. Then he said: "It is easy with the facts at hand to construct a theory. It may be the right one, and until convinced that it is not, I shall act upon it. The substitution of packages was made while you were insensible. The robbers believed that you would carry the fake package in the pocket of your coat. They may not have known the hiding-place of the genuine package, but they had reason to believe, from the tip that had been given them, that the jewels would be found somewhere on your person. The search for it would be short."

"Yes, the lump on my breast would expose the hiding-place."

"As a basis for my theory, the man who phoned you must be set down as the master spirit of the conspiracy. He originated the plot, and his cunning brain never evolved a neater scheme than that which covered the telephone warning."

Blunt bent a puzzled look on the detective.

"I can't see anything neat about the phone business," he said. "Where was the need of the fake warning? The robbery could easily have come off without that senseless trimming."

"Very true, but not in the way the arch-conspirator desired that it should come off."

"I don't follow you," said Blunt.

"And I am not sufficiently primed to make the matter plain. We are reasonably sure of this point: The robbers in making search of your person acted upon information furnished by the person who talked to you over the phone."

"Yes, I will admit that."

Nick puffed at his cigar and thoughtfully watched the smoke as it was expelled from his mouth.

"We must wait for developments," he said. "I 'smell a rat,' as the saying is, and I wouldn't be surprised if my assistant, Chick, to-day succeeded in pulling the rodent out of his hole."

Blunt showed surprise at this statement.

"You have already begun work, then?"

"Yes," said Nick quietly. "I took up your case without consulting you. I didn't think you would object."

"Object? A man in danger of drowning does not object when a life-line is thrown to him, does he?" The strong feeling that marked this utterance was not simulated.

"Chick and Patsy—you have heard of sharp little Patsy, haven't you?—are in the field, and I expect important news will await me on my return to New York."

"Then you must have some idea as to the identity of the two men who attacked us in the hollow."

"Yes, I think I know the fellows. One was tall, the other short. About a month ago two notorious crooks were discharged from Sing Sing. One was a bank burglar, the other an all-around thief. The burglar is a tall man, the other is below the medium height. I do not know, of course, but I firmly believe that the two robbers were Lanky Doogan and Tommy Haste. Who struck you—the tall man?"

"Yes."

"Did you have a good look at his face?"

"No. He was masked."

"Of course. I might have known it. But did he speak?"

"As he raised the club he said, 'Biff!'"

Nick Carter nodded his head. "That is Lanky Doogan's hoodoo exclamation. He has never been able to break himself of the habit of saying 'Biff!' whenever about to strike or fire. I won't ask you any questions regarding the other robber, for he left his card in the hollow."

"Left his card?" exclaimed Blunt in surprise. "He wasn't such a fool as to do that, was he?"

Nick's face wore a broad smile.

"You are giving a literal interpretation to my words. What I meant was that he left something behind which disclosed his identity. He is club-footed, and he left his tracks."

"Shoes didn't match, eh?"

"The shoes matched all right, but the impressions in the dust did not tally. A club-footed man, in walking, always bears lightest on the club foot, or, to be exact, he steps heavily on the good foot and lightly on the game foot. Do you see?"

"Plainly."

The confidential agent regarded Nick with a look of admiration.

"Sure in my mind that Tommy Haste was one of the robbers," the detective proceeded, "I concluded that his partner was Lanky Doogan. They have operated together many times. I know their haunts, and"—looking at his watch—"I have the faith to believe that they are even now under arrest."

Blunt's eyes sparkled with pleasure. "If you are right," he said, "my period of detention may be short."

Nick threw away his cigar and lighted another. He did not speak for several moments. Blunt, scanning his face, failed to discover there the comfort which he expected.

"I hope," said the detective slowly, "that you will not be a prisoner for long, but"—a pause—"you mustn't count too much upon the arrest of Lanky Doogan and Tommy Haste."

The key rattled in the cell door.

Nick turned quickly and confronted the jailer.

"You are wanted at the telephone, Mr. Carter," he said.

After speaking a few words to the prisoner, the detective left the cell.

Arriving at the phone, Nick took up the receiver and found that his caller was Chick. "Lanky and Haste pinched," announced the great detective's assistant. "The robbery was a fluke. They copped a package, but it was a dummy. They are as mad as hornets, and believe that the package they left in Blunt's pocket contains the jewels."

Nick Carter received this report with no sign of astonishment. "Just as I thought," he said to himself as he hung up the receiver.

CHAPTER III.

THE MAN OF MYSTERY.

Nick Carter returned to the cell, remained with Austin Blunt a few minutes, and then, leaving the jail, made his way to the railway station, and was soon on board the local bound for Jersey City. There he took the ferry-boat. It was middle afternoon, and there was a light load.

The detective, with an object in view, walked slowly about the boat, and without appearing to do so, scanned the faces of the passengers.

There came no reward for the work until outside the main saloon, in a corner sheltered from the cold breeze, which blew in from the bay, he noticed a woman in black, whose face was concealed by a heavy black veil.

As Nick passed her she lowered her head quickly, fum-

bled in her pocket, and presently drew out a bottle of smelling-salts.

The detective circled the deck and again approached the woman's corner.

She was no longer there.

The boat was now close to the slip, and though Nick made the most of the time he saw nothing more of the woman.

When the boat was secured, Nick, in the van of the crowd, hurried along the ferry-house. Outside he found a spot from which he could scrutinize the faces of the outgoing passengers without being seen by any of them.

Among the last to leave the boat was the woman in black.

After passing out she walked forward a few steps, and then stopped until all the passengers had gone from sight.

Then she hastened to the ticket office, bought a ticket, and, walking to the edge of the sidewalk, looked up and down the street.

Nick, behind a couple of bales of dry-goods standing on end, with a shrewd idea of what was in the wind, smiled to himself when the woman, after the lapse of several minutes, turned and reentered the ferry building.

He saw her pass the gatekeeper, give up her ticket, and go into the waiting-room.

Her intention was evident. She was about to recross the river, and her destination might be either Jersey City or Elizabeth.

Nick found himself in a quandary. He did not know the woman. There was nothing in her figure or movements which seemed familiar. She might be a man in disguise. If so, the man was a consummate actor, for there was no hint of masculinity in the way he carried himself. Again, if a man, he might have no connection with the jewel robbery, although he had acted queerly at the sight of the detective. The suspicious actions might be accounted for on the assumption that he was engaged in some scheme upon which the law frowned, that he knew Nick by sight, and that he was desirous of avoiding the detective.

"If that is the case," said Nick to himself, "I ought to follow him and find out what his game is. But—and here's the rub—if I do follow him, on the theory that he is an outsider with a game of his own, I would be devoting time which should be given to this peculiar and intensely interesting jewel case."

The detective's watch told him that he had five minutes in which to make up his mind.

Knitting his brows, he gravely pondered the situation.

"I believe," so his thoughts ran, "that I have a man to deal with, and that he is connected with the jewel conspiracy. All signs point that way. He is one of the wolves of society, that's plain. If he is not in this jewel business, why was he in Jersey at the time or immediately after the robbery, and why does he, after sighting me, immediately prepare to cross the river again? It is not probable that his original intention was to cross from Jersey City to New York and then take the next boat back to Jersey. If he had met any one on this side after he left the boat, I might allow a reason for his return to the Jersey shore. But he met nobody. He walked straight from the boat to the ticket office. I'll follow him. He is in the case, I feel sure. Lanky Doogan and Tommy Haste are in quod, and Chick's report can wait."

Nick always had about his person materials for disguises, and when the boat started for the Jersey slip it had as one passenger a man who, from his appearance and alertness, might have been taken for either a successful merchant or the manager of some large business concern.

This man passed the veiled woman in black several times, but she took not the slightest notice of him. From this circumstance Nick Carter hoped that his disguise had deceived her.

The boat arrived at the Jersey City slip in time for all who wished to take the train which stopped at the principal way stations in New Jersey.

Nick was not surprised when he saw the woman board the train.

He followed suit, but did not take the same coach.

At Newark, where the first stop was made, three persons took a passage and one alighted. This one was a slenderly built man of medium size whose full face Nick did not see. He wore a dark brown moustache, and his hair, cut short, was brown.

On the journey to Elizabeth the detective, with a frowning countenance, went through all the coaches.

The frown deepened, for the woman in black was not among the passengers.

When the train reached Elizabeth Nick got off, and, going into the depot waiting-room, sat down for the purpose of determining his next move.

He could form but one reasonable conclusion. The person he was tracking was, beyond question, a man. While on the train he had found opportunity to discard his female disguise and resume the habiliments of his own sex. And he had alighted at the Newark station.

Nick did not regard the man's sudden flight as conclusive evidence that he had penetrated his shadower's disguise. His departure from the train might be in line with his plans, or else a proper precaution taken to evade possible pursuit.

While Nick was thus mentally occupied a telegraph boy entered the room. The detective knew him, but did not speak.

"I am looking for Mr. Nicholas Carter," the boy said. "I was directed to come here. Have you seen him? He is the great detective, you know."

"Have you a telegram for him?" asked Nick in a disguised voice.

"Yes, and it is marked important."

"When did it arrive?"

"Five minutes ago."

The detective concluded to announce himself. The boy was not satisfied, however, and as Nick did not care to remove his disguise, he was forced to accompany the messenger to the office, where the matter of identity was quickly settled.

The telegram was from New York and was signed "Chick." It read thus: "Come immediately. Have struck an important clue."

There was a phone in the office. Nick used it to call up the place from which the telegram had been sent, a branch but a short distance from the ferry.

In answer to the detective's questions, the operator in charge of the branch stated that the telegram had been handed in by a boy.

The great detective got no comfort from this answer. Still, it might be the case that Chick had gone to the ferry to meet his chief and had there in some way learned that Nick, having crossed the ferry to New York, had remained at the dock until the departure of the next boat for Jersey City, and had then taken passage on it; and that the telegram had been despatched with instructions to have it delivered at the Elizabeth railway station on the arrival of the train; but other circumstances, the peculiar actions of the man who had posed as the woman in black, the fact that the robbers of the hollow had been deceived, and that there were elements in the jewel case which pointed to a conspiracy, with headquarters in New York, made the detective hesitate as to his next move.

The more he considered the matter the more vexed and the more puzzled he became.

Something occurred at that moment which determined his course.

A man passed the telegraph office, walking rapidly in the direction of the depot.

Nick caught a glimpse of his face and knew him for the man who had left the train at Newark. There was but one explanation of his early presence in Elizabeth. He must have made the trip between the two cities in an auto.

Had he transacted his business, or was he now on his way to its accomplishment?

The detective would have liked to have made some inquiries before resuming the pursuit of the man, but there was no opportunity. It was essential that he should run down this mysterious individual, ascertain his name, his reputation, and the reasons which had induced him to act in such a peculiar manner.

Nick went out upon the sidewalk and saw the man turn a corner and go down a side street.

A few minutes later the detective saw his quarry ascend the steps of a lodging-house, open the door and walk in.

There was a vacant lot on one side of the building, and Nick secured a position from which he could command a view of both the front and rear entrances and exits.

Ten minutes elapsed, and there came down the front steps a woman in black whose face was concealed by a black veil.

Nick was gazing into the show-window of an art store as the woman passed him.

She did not look in his direction, but out of the tail of his eye the detective saw that she was ill at ease.

A moment later, when her back was toward him, he took another observation, which brought a queer smile to his face.

Externally, the woman was the exact counterpart of the woman who had twice crossed the ferry and who had left the train at Newark in the garb of a man.

But her carriage was different, and there were other points of dissimilarity which only a man of Nick Carter's trained observation would be likely to discover.

The fraud was evidence not only that the man against whom he was pitted was an expert in cunning, but also that the rascal was aware of Nick's presence in Elizabeth.

The great detective squared his jaws in indomitable determination. "I'm up against the real thing," he said to himself, "and my reputation will suffer if I fail to win out."

He followed the woman to the corner, passed it, and concealed himself behind the door of the first hallway that came into view.

It was his opinion that the man he was tracking would presently appear for the purpose of assuring himself that his plan was working satisfactorily.

The man did appear.

Near the hallway he stopped. The woman was just entering the waiting-room of the railway station, but a short distance away.

Seeing nothing of the disguised detective, and apparently satisfied that Nick was not far from the woman, the man turned and walked down the street.

While he stood near the hallway Nick saw his face plainly. It was pale and thin, the nose was sharp, with wide nostrils, and the eyes small, black and gimlety. Dark hair and moustache should have accompanied his complexion; as an incongruity, these were brown.

The man was of middle height and powerfully built. He was an utter stranger to the detective.

Nick made the most of his time while he was in the hallway.

He changed his disguise. He had a reversible coat, and, collapsing his hat, he put on a cap. As an English tourist of the middle class he left his place of concealment and resumed his pursuit of the man of mystery.

After a block had been traversed he came face to face with Patsy.

CHAPTER IV.

A WILD-GOOSE HUNT.

Patsy, made up as a young man about town, passed Nick, but not before the disguised man-hunter had given him a sign, which meant "follow me."

The pursuit was then continued.

The man with the sharp nose and the beady eyes walked several blocks, and then entered a restaurant.

Nick, passing the place, saw the man give an order, after which he seated himself at a table, and took up a newspaper.

Just below the restaurant was a bowling-alley. Nick stepped to the doorway, and waited for Patsy.

There was no time for a prolonged talk. Nick spoke quickly, and Patsy's answers were rapidly given.

"What brought you here?"

"A message from Zacary. He wants you to take the case for him. Says he's got a pointer for you."

"All right. I'll try to see him to-night. In the meantime, there is work for both of us. There is a woman, or, rather, a man in disguise, dressed in black, with a black veil, at the railway station. I think he is waiting for the up-train. He may be intimately connected with this jewel case, and he may be an innocent party, used for some purpose of which he has no conception. Follow him, and find out who he is, and all about him. Report to me at home to-night. That's all; no, hold. Did you see Chick before you left New York?"

"Haven't seen Chick since your orders came."

"Then hike."

Patsy moved away, and Nick crossed the street, first passing the restaurant to assure himself that his man was still inside. He was at the counter, paying for his order, as Nick looked in. The detective was about half-way across the street when the man came out. Upon the sidewalk he stood long enough to light a cigar, and then started off in the direction of the railway station.

But that point was not his destination. At the first cross street, he turned, and went south. Nick followed at a discreet distance. Soon the man was on the road which led to the hollow where the robbery had taken place. And, now, the detective's pursuit assumed a risky phase. Pursuer and pursued were out of the thickly settled part of the town, and the man with the sharp nose and the beady eyes, if he were as shrewd as Nick had conceived him to be, must soon discover that he was being followed.

But, before the man looked around, luck seemed to favor the detective. A farmer driving in a spring wagon came along, and Nick hailed him, and obtained a ride. The farmer was bound for Linden, and would pass through the hollow, but a short distance away, the place toward which Nick believed the man in the road to be directing his steps.

The detective was soon congratulating himself over the fact that the farmer's horse was old, and afflicted with about all the ills with which horseflesh is heir to. Its gait was but a trifle in excess of a man's walk, and, in consequence, the rig reached the hollow while the suspected pedestrian was not more than a few rods behind.

After the wagon had passed up the hill beyond the hollow, and out of sight of it, Nick alighted, and, under cover of the trees, reached a point from which he could observe the movements of the man he had been pursuing.

The actions of that mysterious individual somewhat astonished the detective. He reached the bottom of the hollow, sat down on a large flat rock by the side of the road, took out a newspaper, and began to read.

Occasionally he would look up, and Nick saw that he was smiling.

Half-an-hour went by, and the man still remained on the rock.

He had finished reading, and was now smoking placidly.

The detective, who, during his period of waiting, had done some responsible thinking, left his position behind the tree, a frown on his face, and a resolve in his mind that was somewhat at variance with the plan he had formed when he entered upon the pursuit of the pedestrian.

He had come to the conclusion that the man, knowing that he was being shadowed, had deliberately led his shadower to the hollow. For what purpose? Nick believed that it was to destroy the dangerous activity of the shadower, and give time for the performance of important work placed in the hands of the man's confederate, or confederates.

If there had been any legal warrant for the arrest of the cunning rascal, Nick would have taken his measures accordingly. But he was obliged to confess that the man was merely a suspect, against whom there was nothing of a tangible character.

The man saw Nick come down the hill, gave him a casual glance, and then stared unconcernedly at the road.

The detective halted in front of the man, and said: "Taking it easy, I see."

"Yes," in a light, pleasant voice, with a peculiar nasal accent. "I am enjoying an outing. City man?" he asked, regarding Nick curiously.

"Yes; and out for tramp, like yourself," he added.

The man took out his cigar-case. "Sit down, and have a smoke," he said affably. He made a place on the rock, but Nick did not take it. Instead, he threw himself on the ground a few feet away.

Observing the man closely, the detective was convinced that the hair and mustache were each false.

It was now late in the afternoon. Nick did not purpose remaining on the spot longer than was absolutely necessary. After taking a few whiffs at his cigar, he said: "I must be going. I have an appointment in New York to-night."

"So have I," returned the man on the rock in a matter-of-fact tone. "I'll go along with you to Elizabeth, if you don't mind."

"I shall be glad to have your company," replied Nick, with a smile.

The man smiled in return.

Together they left the hollow, each aware that the other was playing a game.

Nothing was said for some time. Then the sharp-nosed man made this remark: "The hollow we just left was the scene of the jewel robbery, was it not?"

Nick glanced at the speaker in affected surprise.

"The jewel robbery!" he repeated. "When did it occur?"

"This forenoon."

"How did you learn of it?"

"From a policeman in Elizabeth. It is a peculiar affair. The principal has been arrested, and is now in the Elizabeth jail. Nick Carter, the celebrated detective, made the arrest."

The fellow spoke coolly, and easily. Nick said to himself: "You are, indeed, a wonder. What kind of a scheme are you hatching now?"

But aloud he said: "Do you know the particulars?"

"Yes." As given, they corresponded with the facts as known to the Elizabeth police office. There was no statement that the two robbers had been arrested in New York, and that it was known that they had secured a dummy, and not the genuine package of value.

Did the man know of this latest development? Nick resolved to sound him.

"Now that you have given me the details of this robbery," he said, "I call to mind some words I heard spoken by a man who came out of the telegraph office in Elizabeth just before I set out for my walk. He said to a companion: 'They have nabbed the two fellows in New York and found that they had been hoodwinked. They did not see the jewels. That chap Blunt must have worked the game himself.'"

The detective's companion showed mild surprise.

"I hadn't heard this," he said. "That complicates matters, doesn't it?"

"I suppose so."

"What's your opinion? Is Blunt guilty, or has he told the truth?" The questioner tried to speak calmly, but Nick detected a note of eagerness.

"He is guilty, of course," the detective replied promptly. "No other theory will hold water."

The man turned his face aside to hide a smile. Nick now believed that his opinion had not been taken as genuine. And it was clear to his mind that the fellow had been posted respecting developments in New York, and also entertained the suspicion that Nick, whom he knew in spite of the disguise, was working toward the truth.

The situation for Nick Carter was an embarrassing one. As has been said, he could not, in safety, make an arrest on mere suspicion, and he did not feel that it was necessary under the circumstances, as he knew them, to keep at this man's heels until something should develop. It was quite probable that, if he did stay by the man, he would be led on a wild-goose chase that would consume time that might be devoted to more important work. If Chick, or Ten-Ichi, were at hand, the difficulty could be easily overcome. But, with his assistants miles away, and pressing business in New York demanding his attention, he realized that, unless luck should be unusually lavish with her favors, he must soon part company with his mysterious companion.

The sharp-nosed man appeared to divine what was passing in Nick's mind, for he said: "We may meet again some day."

"I hope so," responded Nick heartily. And they smiled at each other. In town they shook hands, and separated. The man had not given his name. But there was no reason why he should have done so.

Before departing for New York, Nick went to the jail. He desired to put a few additional questions to the prisoner.

A surprise was in store for him.

The jailer informed him that Blunt had been taken to the county seat.

"Taken to the county seat," repeated Nick in amazement. "And why was that move made?"

"Judge's order," was the reply. "Thought our jail wasn't strong enough."

Nick contracted his brows. A suspicion which had entered his mind when the jailer made his statement was now taking definite shape.

"Who presented the order?" he asked.

"A Trenton policeman and the policeman took him away."

The detective's face had not cleared when he left the jail. The prisoner had been gone over an hour. If everything was on the square, Blunt should be in Trenton by this time.

At a telephone exchange, Nick called up the judge whose name had been appended to the order.

"Know nothing about the matter," was the answer given to the detective's question. "Never heard of this man Blunt, and did not know there had been a robbery. The order was certainly forged."

In a disgusted frame of mind, Nick took a train for the ferry, and, shortly after dark, was at his home in New York.

Both Chick and Patsy were awaiting him.

CHAPTER V.

A SURPRISING STATEMENT.

Before entering upon an explanation of his end of the case, Nick Carter asked for the reports from his two assistants.

Chick gave the details of the arrest of Lanky Doogan and Tommy Haste, and then continued:

"They were ready to squeal, for they were beside themselves with rage over the way they had been tricked. The plot to rob emanated in the brain of a gun they met one evening at a thieves' resort on the East Side. He gave his name as Bill Hughson, and said he was an English crook, and had been in America but a few months; long enough, however, to get the lay of the land in New York."

"Did they describe the fellow?" questioned Nick, as Chick paused.

"Yes. He was tall, slim, and dark-featured, and wore a black mustache and scrubby beard."

"Go on."

"They tell me that Hughson, after proposing the jewel robbery, and receiving their assent to it, said that final instructions would be given them on the morning of the day on which the hold-up was to take place. They believed from his talk that he was acting on inside information, and that the affair could be pulled off with but little risk. Although he did not say so in direct words, they got the idea that Blunt, the agent of Benoni Zacary, was a party to the scheme. Imagine their disgust, therefore, when they discovered that they had been tricked. They had followed directions given them by Hughson, had taken the package which Hughson had assured them was the one which contained the jewels, only to find, upon opening it that they had taken the dummy."

"Do they think that Hughson hoodwinked them?"

"No. They think the trick was played by Blunt, and are satisfied that the confidential agent tricked Hughson."

"By the way, Chick, did you send me a telegram today?"

"No."

"As I supposed. And now, Patsy, how did you make out with the woman in black?"

"I got all that was coming to me," answered the young detective, with a smile. "I had no difficulty in shadowing her to a Bowery joint. She, or he, as it turned out, made no attempt to throw me off the track. On the face of it, Nick, it seemed the silliest 'pipe' I had ever undertaken."

"I had an idea how it would pan out, Patsy, but I wanted to make certain that I had sized up the situation correctly. Well, what happened?"

"At the hall of the crib, the disguised piker stopped, and waited for me to come up. He lifted his veil when I halted in front of him, and showed the face of Jerry Quair, the retired newsboy. 'Well, Patsy,' says he, 'what's the game?'"

"Jerry is as straight as a string," said Nick. "I don't believe the man who used him knew anything about him."

"You're right, Nick. Jerry opened up at once, and this was the story he told: He was over in Elizabeth to-day, when he bumped up against a man with a sharp beak, who asked him if he would take an easy job for good pay. Jerry had no objection, and the man said he wanted to play a little trick on a friend, and that he needed somebody to undertake a part for him. What he wanted Jerry to do was this: To dress up as a woman, and go to New York. 'You will be followed,' said the man 'by my friend, who will suppose you are some one else. This is where the joke comes in.' He did not explain fully, and Jerry, although he thought the scheme was a little off color, agreed to stand in. Jerry and I are old friends, as you know, and he was soon on to my disguise.

"Now, knowing that I was the shadower, he began to suspect that he was being used as a tool for the furtherance of some shady plot. But he could not guess what it was, and so waited for an opportunity to give me the tip."

"Had he ever seen his employer before the meeting in Elizabeth?"

"Yes. He saw him a few nights ago on the Battery, talking with a tall, thin man."

"Did he know the thin man?"

"No. He thinks the thin man was a stranger in New York, for he heard him say that he had just come from Toronto."

"That is a good pointer. I shall try to make something out of it." Nick walked up and down the room a few times, and then faced Chick and Patsy. "Boys," said he, "we have tackled a stiff game, but we have won in harder ones. Opposed to us is a master of craft. The man we have got to reckon with is not the tall gun from Toronto, but the smooth fellow who hired Jerry Quair, and who led me a little dance in Elizabeth. I'll tell you about it, and then give my opinion of the robbery."

Nick seated himself, lighted a cigar, and entered upon the story of his adventures in and about Elizabeth. Chick and Patsy listened with the greatest interest.

"I had to let the sharp-nosed rascal go," the detective continued, "first, because I had too many strings to my bow at the time, and, further, because I believed that I could find him when I should be ready to close in. A little investigation, which I shall make at the earliest opportunity, will show whether or not I am right in a certain theory I have formed respecting the identity of the arch-conspirator.

"The robbery was planned," Nick went on, "with the idea that the bogus hold-up could be carried out without danger of arrest, and with the almost certainty that the truth would never be known. You see that the man with the sharp nose never put me into his calculations. He counted upon having Blunt held up without witnesses

from the outside. The hollow was selected as the spot of all spots favorable for the purpose. As the plotter calculated, Doogan and Tommy Haste would be in secure hiding before the detectives had arrived at the conclusion that they were the robbers. That they were to be placated for the loss of the chance to make a big haul, I make no doubt.

"In order that he might learn at the earliest possible moment whether or not his scheme of the bogus robbery had proved a success, Sharp Nose went to Elizabeth, and was there when Blunt was brought to the jail. Then it was that he made the discovery that I had butted into the affair."

"I can imagine the expression of his face when he saw you," said Chick.

"I don't think he liked it," said Nick composedly. "My presence at an inopportune moment did not, however, bring on an attack of mental paralysis. He acted upon the discovery, and acted promptly. His confederate, the man from Toronto, was with him, and undoubtedly they conferred together, after which Sharp Nose made up as a woman, and started for New York. My opinion is, that he would not have come to this city, only to start immediately to return to Elizabeth, if he hadn't spotted me on the ferry-boat. I was well disguised, it is true, but Sharp Nose has sharp eyes, and, in acuteness, is one villain among a thousand. Seeing me, he assumed, I think, that I had put him down as a suspicious character. Therefore, he made a change in his plan, a change that contemplated the idea of making a monkey out of yours truly. He thinks he has succeeded, and at the present time is doubtless laughing in his sleeve over the slick way in which he got the better of me. I'll admit that for a time I was deceived as to his game, and that he scored one point. But, as I intimated awhile ago, I learned something while we were together which may, in a few days, shift the boot to the other leg.

"He went back to Elizabeth, and, hunting up his pal, arranged the scheme to take Blunt out of jail, and sequester him. Why should he desire to do this? For the purpose, of course, of fixing the public in the belief that Blunt is guilty. Sharp Nose is probably in the dark as to my knowledge and suspicions, and he may think that I will believe that Blunt was a willing party to the jail escape. He may have looked at the matter in other lights, but, however he may have regarded it, the disappearance of Blunt must have seemed to him a cunning move. He had nothing to lose by putting the confidential agent out of the way of the professional interviewer, and it might be that he would gain by it.

"Of course, the man who personated the Trenton officer was Bill Hughson, the tall fellow from Toronto. I don't apprehend danger to Blunt. It is probably the design of Sharp Nose to keep the young man in enforced seclusion until the final move in the game has been made. Then he will be turned loose.

"And, now, for a consideration of the plot to steal the jewels. It is my opinion that Sharp Nose wanted them for himself, and that the man from Toronto is simply a hired tool. It is also my opinion that Sharp Nose has no stomach for rough work, otherwise he would have undertaken the fake robbery alone. Like an expert billiardist, he plays for safety. But the affair of the hollow was a necessity, for it was essential that the prevailing belief should be that there was a robbery, and that the real thief is Austin Blunt.

"There are wheels within wheels, and, when I shall have looked into the case a little further, I will be able, I hope, to tell you something that will open your eyes."

Chick and Patsy, knowing that their chief disliked to voice his suspicions until they had become divested of vagueness, did not ask to uncover what was in Nick's mind.

But Chick had a question which bore upon an important detail.

"How do you account for the theft of the jewels, Nick? If Blunt told the truth, and I must accept your opinion that he did, there doesn't seem to have been any chance for tampering with the packages outside the office of Benoni Zacary."

"I was about to speak of that matter," replied the great detective. "I was in the jail when your telephone call came. After hearing what you had to say, I went back to Blunt's cell, and had a parting talk. In that talk, Blunt, in response to my questions, said that he received the jewels from Benoni Zacary, the head of the firm, and in the presence of Julius Opping; that he packed them himself, and that, after they went into his pocket, as far as he knew, they stayed there."

"But they didn't stay there, Nick."

"I know," said the detective quietly. "I know, also, that Blunt's story, if told in court, would be put down as very fishy. But he is an innocent man."

"Can you explain the matter?" asked Patsy. "It's a puzzle to me. Maybe Julius Opping, the clerk who was with Blunt at the time of the robbery, could unravel the skein."

"Opping will require looking after," returned Nick. "He is in my collection of interesting subjects, though I haven't yet labeled him."

Nick looked at his watch, then arose. "I may have something to add to what I have said, after I have talked with Benoni Zacary. According to Patsy's statement, he has a pointer for me. It's time to start to keep the appointment. As there is a possibility that I may be followed, it is well to take precautions. Chick, you will shadow me, and, Patsy, you will shadow Chick. Select safe disguises. I will walk slowly, so that you will have no difficulty in finding me."

The Broadway jeweler was a bachelor, and had apartments over his store. Ten o'clock, the hour fixed for the appointment with Nick Carter, found him pacing the floor of his reception-room. He was nervous, and ill at ease, and he drew a deep breath when he heard some one ascending the stairs.

Upon Nick's entrance, Zacary's countenance showed relief.

The detective saw a thin, stoop-shouldered man of about sixty, with sharp features, and a long gray beard. The eyes were small, light blue, and watery, and the lids were heavy and red.

When he spoke, it was in a thick, nasal voice.

"I got a hart plow, Mr. Garter," he said. "It vill spell ruin ef you can't hellup me."

"The loss of sixty thousand dollars might not so seriously affect the business of such a prosperous firm as I have always supposed yours to be," replied Nick, in some surprise.

"You ton't understant, Mr. Garter," whined Zacary. "I tidn't loshe zigsty tousand tollars. I loshe dree hundert tousand tollars."

"What? How could that be?"

Nick's expression was one of profound astonishment.

"I'll dell you, Mr. Garter. Colonel Bodwin, who zelected and acreed to puy der zixty tousand tollars 'vorth of chewels is a fery rich mans. At der dime he made der zelections he said he vished ve had a tiamond necklace vit for a ka-veen, and he vould puy dat, too. Afder he vos gone, Mr. Garter, I vent out and vound necklace dat vould have made der golonel's eyes vater if he gould have zeen it. It wos in Dupre's, on Zixt' Avenue. It vos vorth two hundert and vorty tousand tollars. Tiamondts, zapphires, and rupies. I vanted it, but I gouldn't get it on my vace, Mr. Garter, though I have peen in business here for dwo years. Dupre temandet my note and a pill of zale of my sdore as zecurity."

Zacary paused and wiped the perspiration from his face and some of the water from his eyes. Nick was intensely interested in the statement that was being made. Nothing that had been said by Zacary, however, conflicted with the theory he had formed before entering the jeweler's apartment.

"I got der necklace," Zacary went on, "and gafe it to Misder Plunt."

"Gave it to Blunt? Haven't you made a mistake?" The detective bent a sharp look on the jeweler.

"No, I gafe it to him and he vent avay vith it. Der mistake vos made in gifing der necklace to him."

"Then you think Blunt is guilty of the robbery?"

"Of gourse"—regarding Nick with surprise. "But he had gonfederates."

Nick had no comment to make, and Zacary proceeded with his statement.

"I gave der necklace to Plunt and told him to zhow it to der golonel. I would have pet my life dat der golonel vould have znapped at it, for it vose a peauty, Mr. Garter. Dere nefer vos anything lige it. Tiamonds, zapphires and rupies of der vinest vater, Mr. Garter; pig and dazzling so dat it vould make your head zwim to look at tem.

"I made Plunt zwear on der Piple that he vould not dell anypody dat he had der necklace. It vos not put in der backage vith der other chewels, but vos wrapped up py itself and vent in his vaistcoat bocket. You must have had a dalk with Plunt, Mr. Garter. Didn't he zpeak of der necklace?"

"No," answered Nick shortly.

"Dat is strange," commented Zacary with a puzzled look. "If he claims to pe innocent, dere zeems no reason vy he should nod zpeak of it."

"Perhaps he was obeying your injunction not to mention the necklace," said the detective.

"Der zeal of zecrecy vos removed py der robbery, Mr. Garter."

Steps were now heard ascending the stairs. In a moment the door opened and Austin Blunt entered. He showed surprise and pleasure on beholding Nick Carter.

"I'm glad you are here," he said to the detective.

"One question," spoke Nick, "before you explain your presence. Did Mr. Zacary give you a very valuable necklace as well as the package of jewels just before you started for New Jersey?"

"Did he give me a necklace? Certainly not. I carried the package; nothing else."

CHAPTER VI.

NICK FISHES FOR POINTS.

Austin Blunt's denial sent Benoni Zacary into a spasm that presaged a physical collapse. Nick quickly used his arms as a support. The jeweler choked, clenched his hands and rolled his eyes, and at last found voice to denounce Blunt as a liar of the first magnitude.

"Dake him to chail, dake him to chail," he sputtered. "He vos a liar and a tief, and I vish I gould send him to der chair."

Blunt's face darkened with anger. He would have spoken had not Nick Carter given him a warning glance.

"Mr. Zacary," said the detective, "a mistake has been committed. I do not doubt your word, and, strange as it may seem to you, I do not doubt the word of Mr. Blunt."

"Poth dell der druth? Dat is imbossible," said the jeweler sharply. He looked at Blunt and his eyes snapped.

"I think explanations will set matters right. Let me ask you a few questions. First, did you give Blunt the necklace at the time you gave him the jewels selected by Colonel Bodwin?".

"No. He had gone out der door and I galled him pack."

"That is not so," spoke up Blunt quickly and angrily.

"Don't interrupt," said Nick in a tone of command. "You shall have a chance to speak presently."

"I nefer saw such a liar," muttered Zacary.

"Here is another question," said the detective. "Is your eyesight good?"

"I vish it vos petter," was the surly answer.

"Don't you use glasses?"

"No. I don't like der idea." He looked at Nick shrewdly.

"Then how can you buy precious stones if you can't see well?"

"I go vell enough if I hold der stones up glose to my eyes. But my glerk, Chulius Opping, always zuperintends der puying."

"Did Opping see the necklace?"

"Nefer a vonce. My eyes vos good enough for such pig stones."

"Did you see Opping when you called Blunt back to give him the necklace?"

"I ton't rememper dat I saw him."

"Where does Opping reside?"

"He's got a room in der next plock."

"Have you told him when it was that you gave Blunt the necklace?"

"I told him dat Plunt took der necklace, but I ton't zpeak about der tetails."

"Has Opping a phone?"

"Yes."

"Then please call him up and request him to come to the store. It is my desire to finish the conversation downstairs. I wish to get the lay of the ground."

Opping was at home and agreed to come to the office in half-an-hour.

While awaiting his arrival Blunt told his story.

When he left the jail in Elizabeth he had no suspicion of fraud, but on the way to the depot his custodian informed him that a deception had been practised. "I am acting," said the bogus officer, "in behalf of Nick Carter, who believes he can work better on this robbery case with you out of jail. It is his wish that you remain in hiding until your innocence has been established. My orders are to take you to a place in New York where he can safely meet and confer with you."

"At first I had no suspicion that I was being tricked, but on the way to the ferry I began to have doubts as to the honesty of my companion. I did not like his looks, in the first place. He had an evil countenance. His eyes were shifty, and when talking he never looked me squarely in the face. Before we reached the dock at New York I had made up my mind to slip away from him and come straight to you."

"Your presence here shows that you succeeded," said Nick.

"I am here all right," smilingly, "but I did not arrive in accordance with any plan I had made. Something happened that was not down on my program. We had no sooner left the ferry-boat than a heavily-built man, who might have been an officer in plain clothes, grabbed my companion and tried to make off with him. There was a struggle, and while it was going on I made my escape. I hurried to your residence, Mr. Carter, and met one of your assistants just coming out of the door. I did not know him, but when I asked for you and had given my name I was told that you were at Zacary's."

Nick, for reasons of his own, did not ask any questions at that time.

The half-hour was nearly up when Benoni Zacary led the way down-stairs.

The front door of the jewelry store was at the end of a long, narrow, arched passageway. Inside the establishment, after the lights had been turned up, the detective took quick note of the arrangements.

The show-counters were all on one side. There were but two, with a passageway between them. Behind the second counter was the safe, and back of the safe was the office of the proprietor. Adjoining it, with a communicating door, was another office.

Julius Opping, arriving on time, exhibited surprise, but not fear, when he saw Nick Carter and Austin Blunt.

"What does this mean?" he harshly demanded. "Has that fellow," pointing to Blunt, "coughed up the shiners?"

The confidential agent did not open his mouth to reply to this insulting speech. But his face spoke volumes.

"No, Chulius," said Zacary, "dere has peen nothing coughed up yet avile. Dis is a gonsultation at der reguest of Mr. Garter."

Opping turned to Nick in cold inquiry. "Going to put Blunt through the third degree, eh?"

"Hardly that," replied the detective pleasantly. "Mr. Blunt has nothing to conceal."

Zacary's clerk shrugged his shoulders. "It will take evidence to make me believe that," he said.

"At the proper time the evidence will be forthcoming, Mr. Opping. Now to business. There is a mystery in this affair, and I look to you for assistance in clearing it up."

Opping had a heavy face, and obstinacy was written in every line of it. He muttered something which Nick did not hear.

"To begin," said the detective, "I will ask Mr. Zacary to explain in detail every move made from the time he took in his hand the jewels selected by Colonel Bodwin until he saw leave the premises the person to whom he gave the necklace."

"I vos in my office and Mr. Plunt vos in de udder von ven I took from der zafe der Bodwin stones."

"Correct," said Blunt.

"I handed der chewels to Plunt in Obbing's bresence, and Plunt wrapped dem up in a backage. Der package vos a zhallow pox, gushioned—der gind ve use—and ven der chewels vos in it, it vos wrapped in baber and died vid a sdring."

"Did you see him do all this?" asked Nick.

"No, I tidn't zee him do it," replied Zacary testily. "Der door vos closed petween us, but I supposes he did it."

"Well, what next?"

"Opping vos in der vront pehind der gounter at der time Plunt came out, and he and Chulius vent off together. I vaited a moment, gonzidering apoud der necklace, and then I vent out guick to gatch Plunt and give it to him. I expected dat he vould pe on der zidewalk, but I vound him in der bassagevay. He must haf peen goming pack for somethings. I gafe him der necklace, told him vot I vanted, and I saw him put der necklace in his vaistgoat bocket."

Zacary paused. Opping was regarding him in blank astonishment. Nick Carter noted the expression and smiled.

"Now, Mr. Opping," said the detective in a compelling voice, "it's up to you to do a little straightening. You heard what Mr. Zacary said. Question: Did Austin Blunt leave you for one moment after both of you left the store in company to take the boat for Jersey City?"

"No," was the positive answer, "he did not."

Blunt's eyes brightened. Then a strange expression came into them. He looked from Opping to Zacary and from Zacary to Opping.

Nick Carter appeared to be enjoying the situation. But his manner was cool and easy.

Benoni Zecary passed a shaking hand over his face, and then, producing a blanket bandanna, blew a blast from his nose that shook the chandeliers.

"Another question, Mr. Opping," Nick went on. "Did you see any one enter the passageway from the street as you went out of it?"

"No."

Benoni Zecary now found voice, but it came in a half-shriek. "I zee it all now, Mr. Garter. Dose two mens vos in gahoots togedder. Dey pin maging pelieve dey vos enemies, but you gan zee vith halluf an eye dot dey vos blaying in togedder. Chulius," pointing a long, trembling finger at the clerk, "you vos a teef. Vere vos dot necklace?"

"Aw, go button your mouth," responded Opping roughly. "You have got bugs."

"If I got pugs," wailed the jeweler, "you got shnakes. You vos von yourselluf. Here I dook you in ven you hatn't a rag to your pack. I varmed you in my pozom and now you sdings me."

"How sharper than a serpent's child it is to have a toothless thank," misquoted Opping with a sneer.

"What is your opinion now?" said Nick to the heavy-faced clerk.

"My opinion is that Blunt never stole the necklace. I see no reason, however, to change my opinion about the theft of the Bodwin jewels."

"Perhaps I can induce you to do so."

"You have my permission to try," replied Opping coldly.

Zacary had found a chair and was sitting in it with his head in his hands.

Nick took Opping aside and talked to him rapidly in whispers for several minutes.

Toward the end of the talk Opping began to nod his head. When Nick had finished his argument Zacary's clerk walked up to Blunt and held out his hand. "I have been making a blanked fool of myself and I have insulted you. I have always been a lover of fair play, and so I wish to apologize for the suspicions I have entertained and for the words I have used. My eyes have been opened. I no longer believe you to be guilty. There has been crooked work, but neither you nor I have had anything to do with it."

Blunt's fine face flushed with pleasure at these manly words. He took the hand of Opping and pressed it heartily.

Nick Carter looked on with a pleased expression.

Presently the detective said: "I would like to inspect the two offices."

Opping took a key from his pocket and, going to the first door, opened it. Inside he pressed a button, and the room was flooded with light.

Next he opened the door communicating with the other office.

Nick, standing in the doorway between the two rooms, made a careful inspection of each.

The result seemed to satisfy him.

The room used by Zacary contained a roller-top desk, a small table and a stool and chair. The front of the safe formed the greater part of one side of the room.

In the other office was a low desk, a table, chairs, and a portable wardrobe. This wardrobe had curtains that screened the interior. Nick stepped forward and drew the curtains aside. There was nothing in the wardrobe, not even hooks.

"What is this used for?" he asked Blunt.

"Nothing. It was put in for use, but no use has ever been made of it."

The detective walked out of the rooms and looked at the rear end of the store. It was bare.

"Is there a cellar underneath?" was his next question, addressed to Julius Opping.

"Yes. The trap is there," pointing to a corner.

"What is kept down there?"

"Old boxes, mainly."

"Any entrance from the outside?"

"No."

"I'd like to go down into the cellar for a moment."

Benoni Zacary heard the words and raised his head. "Dat vos voolishness," he said. "Maype you dink you vind der chewels town dere."

Nick made no reply.

Opping lifted the trap and then led the way down the steep stairs. The cellar was small, occupying but a third of the store space. It was lighted by a small, grated window. As Opping had said, there was nothing there but a few boxes and odds and ends.

Nick moved the boxes about, looked into them, and inspected every portion of the cement floor. Some crumbs that he picked up near one of the boxes seemed to interest him.

"Ever take your lunch down here?" he said, looking both at Opping and Blunt.

Each gave a negative answer.

He said no more and walked toward the stairs.

Above, they found Zacary pacing the floor, his lips twitching and his eyes more watery than ever. He asked no questions, and Nick volunteered no explanations. Instead, he asked:

"Have you a partner?"

Zacary shook his head. "I runs der pusiness all alone py minselluf."

"Any relatives in New York?"

Zacary started, and then regarded the questioner fixedly.

Nick repeated the question.

"No, I haf no relationships here. I nefer married." Then he added vindictively: "Vot you do with dose teefs? Tage 'em to der chail, yes? I mage gomplaint in der mornings."

Nick contracted his brows.

"The matter requires serious consideration," he said gravely.

Zacary became frightfully angry.

"Who pe running dis vuneral, vat? You, or vos it me? I zay arrest der teefs. Dey shtole my chewels. Dey haf ruint me. I go into pankruptcy to-morrow."

"With your large stock?" said Nick with raised eyebrows.

"My shdock vos not large. I vos all right if I get dose chewels pack. Lock dose mens up, and den, berhaps, dey dell vere dey blant my broberty."

"If you insist, I must, I suppose."

"Never mind about his insistence," said Opping. "I insist."

"So do I," spoke Blunt. "As honest men we must refuse to run away. I trust to you, Mr. Carter, to make the period of our imprisonment as short as possible."

Zacary looked first at Opping and then at Blunt. The expression of their faces, the words they had used and the tone, appeared to puzzle him. After wiping his eyes he said, humbly:

"Maype, I ton't know; maype I mage a mistake. If you poys vosn't guilty, I pe glad. But," with a return to his former manner, "if you vosn't guilty, who vos?"

"I hope to be able to tell you before long," said Nick.

CHAPTER VII.

THE IDENTITY OF SHARP NOSE.

The great detective called up the nearest police station and then waited until the arrival of officers to place Blunt and Opping in detinue for the night. Zacary promised to appear in court in the morning and make a complaint, which, at Nick's suggestion, should allege that the robbery had been committed in New York. "You may consistently allege that," said the detective, "for the robbery took place as soon as the valuables left your store."

Zacary interposed no objection. In fact, he was pleased over the reflection that he would not have to leave the city to give his testimony.

After the officers and the prisoners had gone, Nick bade the jeweler good night and started down Broadway in the direction of his residence.

He had gone but a short distance when he became aware that he was being followed. To the ordinary observer there would have been nothing to indicate this fact, but Nick, besides his years of training and his acuteness which had been sharpened to a fine edge, possessed a subtle sense that had more than once warned him of impending danger. The man who was following him was half-a-block behind, and there was nothing suspicious in his actions. That is, there was nothing calculated to arrest the attention of the ordinary pedestrian. Nick first walked slowly, then rapidly. He smiled when, out of the tail of his eye, he observed that his movements were being copied.

To take anything but the usual route to reach his residence would be a foolish move, if Nick wished to trap the shadower, and that was Nick's dearest wish at the moment.

He was cudgeling his brain for a plan to hoodwink and entrap the spy when he saw on a corner ahead of him a night patrolman.

The official guardian of the peace was well known to the detective, and a shrewd idea at once came to him.

Accosting the officer, he said in a low voice: "Come into this hallway. I have a favor to ask."

They went into the hallway and were talking earnestly when the shadower passed. He did not look at the detective and the patrolman, and neither of the two cast a glance at the man.

So the man thought, but, as a matter of fact, Nick,

without seeming to look, caught a glimpse of the shadower's face.

He was heavily bearded, but the nose was the nose of the man who had played with Nick in Elizabeth.

Five minutes went by, and then the two men in the hallway separated. The patrolman resumed his beat. The other, a man who wore the hat and coat of the detective, came out on the sidewalk, went across the street, and continued his walk toward Nick's residence.

The patrolman saw the shadower emerge from a doorway on the opposite side of the street and walk to a corner. Here he crossed and followed the person who wore the clothes of Nick Carter.

With a peculiar smile on his face the patrolman began to shadow the shadower.

The man who was being pursued turned into one of the narrow streets east of Broadway, and, after going half-a-block, stopped in front of a building where repairs were being made and lighted a cigar.

The shadower was then not more than twenty feet behind.

Running swiftly and noiselessly, the man reached the west side of a barricade erected in front of the building so as to enclose two-thirds of the sidewalk. He had obtained a position from which he could see his intended victim without being seen himself.

At this moment the electric lights went out. A dozen seconds and they were again in working order.

The suppositious Nick Carter was about to resume his walk when a warning cry from the patrolman caused him to stop and wheel quickly.

At that instant the murderous shadower was upon him.

There was the flash of a knife, and the victim staggered and fell, his head striking the edge of the stone sidewalk with such force as to induce unconsciousness. As he went down the assassin started to run, when the stern command, "Halt, or I'll shoot!" made him pause.

His right hand was concealed under his coat and against his breast when he turned to face the patrolmen, who, pistol pointed, stood a few feet away.

"Throw up your hands!"

For answer the hand came out from the breast, and there was hurled at the patrolman a gelatinous ball, which broke against the victim's cheek, releasing an oily, gaseous liquid, the fumes of which were overpowering.

The pistol cracked as the ball was thrown, but a quick movement on the part of the assassin prevented the desired execution.

Fainting, half-blinded, the patrolman staggered after the fleeing villain, only to stumble and fall over the prostrate form of the wounded man.

The shot had been heard by patrolmen on Sixth Avenue, and the man garbed as the patrolman was trying to get to his feet when three policemen arrived.

"Why," exclaimed one of the officers, as he looked into the face of the wounded man, "this is Tom Terriss. Who"—with a suspicious glance at the man in the uniform of the patrolman—"who are you?"

"I am Nick Carter."

And then, without entering upon an explanation, the detective asked: "Has the fellow who ran away from here, who did the stabbing, been arrested?"

A negative answer was given. They had seen no one leave the street. Probably the villain had concealed himself in a doorway until he found the coast clear. Nick sighed in disappointment. He had prepared a plan which he had believed would work, but Tom Terriss, brave and well-meaning though he was, had failed him. Tom had not been sufficiently alert and circumspect.

The flow of blood was stanched, the patrol summoned, and the wounded officer was taken to the receiving hospital. There it was found that the cut was not a serious one. The knife had missed the heart, and with good care Terriss would be ready for resumption of duty in a few weeks.

At the precinct station, Nick, now recovered from the effects of the powerful anesthetic, told his story. He did not go into the details of his connection with the jewel robbery case, but confined himself to a recital of the events succeeding his departure from the jewelry store.

After making his explanation he gave a description of the man who had stabbed Terriss, and had just finished when a well-known Fifth Avenue merchant entered the captain's office.

After saluting the captain and Nick, he asked: "There was trouble, a fight, or something or other on ——— Street, near Sixth Avenue, about an hour ago, wasn't there?"

"Yes," said the captain. "Do you know anything about it?"

"Perhaps. I'll tell my story, and then you may judge whether or not it has bearing on the case. To-night I got on a Sixth Avenue 'L' train at the Eighth Street station to go to Fifty-fifth Street. While my car was crossing —— street I sat by an open window looking west, and I saw one man lying on the edge of the sidewalk, another man staggering toward him, and a third man climbing over a high board barricade close by. This man was on the east side of the barricade. One foot rested on a projection of one of the columns supporting the front of the building. His hands clutched the top of the boards of the barricade."

The captain, without comment, turned to the phone. A call was made, a command was issued, and then he said: "The chances are that he is not there now, but we shall soon know."

Fifteen minutes later a report was made. No man had been found behind the barricade or in the building.

The merchant was thanked for his information, and Nick and he left the station at the same time.

A cab took the detective to his residence.

It was after midnight, and he was greatly in need of rest.

He was disappointed, but not alarmed, to discover that neither Chick nor Patsy had returned.

He gave orders to be called at seven o'clock.

Nick slept "like a top," and had just finished dressing when Chick entered the room.

He was smiling.

"Where is Patsy?" asked Nick, smiling in return.

"On a scout. He's all right."

"When did you reach here?"

"About two o'clock. You were sleeping the sleep of the just, so I did not awaken you. Besides, I knew my news would keep overnight."

"You have good news, judging by your expression. What is it?"

"Let's have a cup of coffee first. My tongue will work better after a little stimulant."

After coffee, with cigars lighted, came the time for Chick's story.

"Patsy and I went out of the house about five minutes after you had gone. We knew your route and we carried out your instructions. I went ahead. Patsy followed a block behind. You had gone about half the distance to the jewelry store when I noticed that a tall man was following you. I instantly concluded that he was the partner, or tool of the piker with the sharp nose. After you went up the stairs to Zacary's apartments the man took a position across the street and waited. He had not been there more than two minutes before something happened. A big man came from behind and pinioned his arms. There was a struggle, and I came up in time to see the finish. The spy is a strong, wiry fellow, but he had been caught napping. The big man, who, at my approach, said he was an officer, had the man down and was handcuffing him.

"'I'm from Toronto,' announced the big man, 'and I have been chasing after this rooster for two months. His name is Bill Hughson, and he is wanted in Toronto for half-a-dozen robberies.'

"'Didn't you try to arrest him at a North River ferry this afternoon' I asked.

"'Yes, and he got away from me. He is a slippery customer, but he won't slip away this time.'

"Satisfied from his appearance and manner that the big fellow was what he represented himself to be, I told him that I was a detective and had been looking for Hughson, who was seriously implicated in a New York job. The prisoner muttered an oath when I said this, but he made no denial.

"The Toronto officer was for taking Hughson to a police station at once, but for reasons which you, Nick, will appreciate, I objected. After I had whispered a few words into the officer's ear he consented to do as I wished. With Hughson in tow we went to a cheap hotel on a side street and engaged a room. Before going to it I saw Patsy, and instructed him to stand at the Broadway corner, from which position he could keep an eye on the jewelry store less than half-a-block beyond and also be where I could find him in case I had quick need of his services.

"In the room of the hotel, with the door closed and locked, I opened my batteries on Mr. Hughson. I informed him that the case against him in New York was of such magnitude that the Toronto officials might agree, when put in posssession of the facts, to waive their priority right in favor of this city.

"Hughson winced at this statement and asked me to show my hand. I am of an obliging nature"—Chick grinned—"and so I complied, not forgetting, however, to give the strongest kind of value to my cards. 'You,' I said, 'were associated with another gun in a big jewel robbery. The plunder amounts to over a hundred thousand dollars.'

"'That's a whopper,' snapped the prisoner. 'The——' He stopped, for he saw he was putting his foot into it and said no more.

"Continuing, I said that he and his partner had plotted to throw suspicion on Austin Blunt, but that I was now in possesssion of information which would completely exonerate Blunt. Hughson asked what the information was, and I reeled off the best fairy tale I could think of at the moment. I told him that on the boat bound for Jersey City Blunt met you, Nick, and that he opened up to you regarding his mission, and at your request made a reexamination of the contents of the packages. Blunt, I went on, was dumfounded on discovering that he had two dummies. He could not understand how the substitution of the valuable package for one of the dummies had been made, and if you, Nick, had not persuaded him to go on, leaving all explanations to Zacary he would have taken the return boat from Jersey City. I said further that Opping was present at the time of the discovery, and that the three—Blunt, Opping and yourself—had agreed to keep mum for awhile in order to throw dust in the eyes of the plotters.

"After I had relieved myself of this yarn I was afraid Hughson would refuse to swallow it. But he did. He is not as shrewd and cunning as his master—the man with the sharp nose. He is a worker, not a leader."

"That story was rather gauzy, Chick," was Nick's comment; "but as it served the purpose I will admit that it was the proper story to have told."

"I talked about ten minutes more, Nick, and then Hughson, believing that there was a good case against Sharp Nose, and that he might find himself in a bad mess if he kept silent, told me all he knew. I don't believe he

kept anything back. I can spot con talk when I hear it, and I am convinced that I got straight goods from Hughson. He swore by all that's holy that he had nothing to do with the robbery. That the job was done by Sharp Nose, single-handed."

"Who is Sharp Nose? Did Hughson give the rascal's name and so forth?"

"He said he is an English Jew, and across the pond is known among guns as 'Crafty' Solomon."

CHAPTER VIII.

NICK FINDS THE KEY.

Nick Carter looked pleased and not surprised at the announcement of the arch-conspirator's name and nationality.

"What you have just said, Chick," was his remark, "is in line with suspicions which I have entertained since yesterday. I will speak about them after you have finished."

"Hughson met Crafty Solomon in Toronto three months ago. This was a few weeks after Solomon's arrival in America. They did not do any business together in the Dominion, but they roomed in the same house and saw much of each other. Solomon was reticent regarding himself and his plans, but said he hoped to make a big haul in New York and might want Hughson's assistance.

"About a month ago he left for this city, and Hughson soon received a letter asking him to come on. Hughson did so, and, on meeting Solomon, was given an inkling of the job in prospect. Valuable jewels were to be lifted, but Solomon said he required no help in the lifting. Hughson would be needed for a little preliminary work, but the principal services were to be performed after the robbery had taken place.

"These were to consist of work having as an object the hoodwinking of the detectives who might be employed in the robbery case."

"Did Solomon mention the value of the plunder which he expected to lift?" questioned Nick.

"Yes. Sixty thousand dollars."

"Was anything said about a necklace?"

"No."

"Go on."

"Hughson told what he had done in Elizabeth, and said he had worked the jail trick, and would have carried out all of Solomon's instructions if he hadn't been jumped at the ferry by the Toronto officer. After his escape he had not dared to show his face in daylight, and so was prevented from keeping an appointment made with his employer. After dark he made up his mind to go to a point near your residence, the location of which Solomon had given him, hoping to discover something that might profit him and his employer. He saw a man he took to be you come out of the house, and he followed at a distance until he saw you go up the stairs to keep your appointment with Zacary. You know what happened afterward."

"Is that all?"

"No, Nick, the best is to come. I asked Hughson if he knew where Solomon lodged. He said he did, and agreed to tell me if I would promise to use my influence to prevent a prosecution for complicity in the jewel robbery. He was willing, he said, to go on the stand, in the event of Solomon's arrest, and tell all he knew. I felt sure you would approve, so I made the promise."

"You did right," said Nick quickly.

"The place where Crafty Solomon holds out," said Chick, "is on the East Side, on one of the streets near the first bridge. I have got the number of the building and also the number of the room."

"Good. Chick, you have done well. Hughson's confession added to what I know will furnish authorization for Solomon's arrest for the jewel robbery, while his murderous assault last night makes him doubly an outlaw. Now, as to Patsy. Where is he and on what line is he working?"

"I saw him after I left the hotel, and he said you had gone into the jewelry store, and that a suspicious-looking man was piping the place. As it was my desire to have Hughson swear to the statement he had made, I was obliged to leave Patsy, but I did so with the understanding that he was to keep his eyes on the man and ascertain what his intentions were as regarded yourself. In case of trouble he was to be on hand when needed."

Nick looked grave. There had been trouble, and Patsy had not put in an appearance. What had happened? Patsy must either have lost track of Crafty Solomon, or else have met with some misadventure, else he would certainly have appeared at the time of the murderous attack on the disguised patrolman and the firing of the pistol.

Chick was about to speak when Patsy walked into the room.

His face looked worn and haggard, but his eyes were bright, and there was a smile on his lips.

"Been up all night," he said, "and feel like a lost sigh in a thunder-storm."

"Done any business?" asked Nick eagerly.

"I am inclined to think so. I have holed your man."

Nick looked at Chick. "In a crib on the East Side, eh?" he said quietly.

"No. What you have said shows you know something, but I'll go you one better. Mister man with the sharp nose has changed his quarters. He took French leave of the East Side early this morning, and sought another hole on the West Side in the White Mice neighborhood, No. 849 —— Street. I saw him pay for a room, and I stayed about the place from four o'clock until half-an-hour ago. It is a sure shot that he is now wooing the drowsy and that he won't stir out of the joint while daylight lasts."

"Say, Nick," said Chick, "my work has been discounted. What came to me must go to Patsy."

"You forget Hughson," replied the great detective, with a smile expressive of high appreciation. "Each of you is entitled to a gold medal. But tell me, Patsy," his tone changing to one of marked curiosity, "how you managed to track your man. You must have lost sight of him for a time."

"So I did, but how did you know of it?"

"I'll tell you later."

Patsy nodded his head understandingly. "Well," said he, "I waited on the corner where Chick left me until I saw you come out of the jewelry store and go down the street. I saw you stop and speak to a patrolman, and I also lamped the movements of the man who had been following you. Once I got sight of his face, and the beak gave him dead away. After you and the cop came out of the hallway I believed you knew something was afoot, and that you had had an understanding with the cop. I saw Sharp Nose turn and rubber in your direction. I thought that you was on, and as I was on, too, it appeared to me as if Sharp Nose was in a good way to be up against it.

"Down the street I went with my lamps skinned for developments, when, as I was nearing a corner, the electric lights went out. They have crazy spells once in awhile, you know, but in selecting this moment for an exhibition of their bughouse proclivities, they did me dirt. The dark period was short, but it was long enough to give me a starry feeling. Some merchant had been having some sewer repairs made, and about half the sidewalk in front of the store was obstructed. I was close to the obstruction, and looking over it at you, the cop, and Sharp Nose when the lights went out. Result, I went ker-bump against the obstruction, fell over it or beside it, and struck my block a wallop that caused me to see all the stars above and about a million more. At the moment I hit the obstruction I thought I heard the report of a pistol, but I may have been mistaken. Maybe something inside of me exploded."

"Your ears did not deceive you. There was a pistol fired," said Nick.

"Good. Then I won't have to chase to a doctor's. Well, when I got at myself again, there was a crowd around me, and some good Samaritan was pouring whisky down my neck. In a few minutes I was in fair condition for the resumption of business. When I had last seen you, Nick, you were about to turn the corner, to go east. I hurried to the side street, but could see nothing of you, the patrolman, or the man with the sharp nose. I must have lost ten or fifteen minutes on account of my mishap. Thinks I, I'll walk over to Sixth Avenue, and then, if I fail to find a patrolman able to put me wise, I'll go to the precinct station.

"I was passing by a high board barricade when the sound of some person moving about behind it made me stop. I had no suspicion of the truth, but had an idea that some burglar had made the noise. Pretty soon there came other sounds, as if the marauders were trying to get out. These new sounds proceeded from the east side of the barricade. I slipped around to the west side and waited. Presently, who should hit the sidewalk and point toward Sixth Avenue but my man with the razor-edge beezer. Did I shadow him? My tired eyes and weary limbs say yes. I hiked it to the East Side, and then I hiked it to the West Side. I have traveled miles, and my feet feel like mountains."

"You must go to bed at once," said Nick in a decisive tone. "My story can wait until you are in proper condition to hear it. Chick," he continued, after Patsy had gone, "we must move at once. It is reasonable to suppose that Solomon will put in the forenoon, at least, in sleep, but we must not take any chances. It is a pity that the watch over his hiding-place could not have been continuous."

"I think we will find him, all right," said Chick.

"I hope so."

The two detectives went out, and on foot and by car reached the building designated by Patsy. There was a

notion store on the first floor. The upper stories were used for lodging purposes.

Nick and Chick went up the narrow, dirty stairway, pulled a dirty bell-cord, and a slatternly woman responded. When Nick gave his name she became obsequious, and answered all questions readily and cheerfully. But some of the answers were far from satisfactory. The man Nick wanted to see had paid for a room, had gone to it, but had not remained in it more than a few hours.

"Where did he go?"

"I don't know."

"Did he say anything before he left?"

"Yes, he said he had changed his plans and was going to leave as soon as a friend came."

"Did the friend come?"

"Sure he did. It was this way: I have the watch from twelve, midnight, until twelve, noon. The man came for a room about four o'clock and stayed in the room until about seven. Then he came into the office and said he wanted to use the phone. He called up somebody, and they talked a minute, and then the man hung up the receiver and went back to his room. About twenty minutes afterward a tall man with long, black whiskers came in and asked to be shown to the new lodger's apartment. He had a big bundle under his arm."

"They went out together, did they?"

"I suppose so, though I did not see them. I must have dozed in my chair, for I saw nothing more of them. When I went to the room a little while ago it was empty."

Nick asked for the register, saw that Solomon had given his name as "William Christie," and then said he would like to inspect the room which the man had occupied. He believed the story told by the woman, but he wanted to make sure that Solomon had really gone.

Without hesitation the woman led the way to the room. It was unoccupied, and the bed gave evidence of having been used.

There was a looking-glass on one side of a wash-stand, and on the carpet below the glass was a large wad of combings.

Nick took up the wad and saw that the hairs were long and white. He glanced at other sections of the carpet, and observed that all were clear of dirt or débris.

"Who used this room before Mr. Christie came?" he asked.

"A young man who works in a saloon. He had it for a month, and went away yesterday."

"Did you make a thorough clean-up after he left?"

The woman looked hurt. "Of course I did. It was as clean as a whistle when Mr. Christie took it."

"How do you account for these gray hairs which I picked up on the floor?"

"They were not there last evening when I dusted the room."

Nick had nothing more to say.

For some moments after he had left the lodging-house he was in a brown study. At last he said to Chick. "It's all right. I believe I have got it."

"Got what, Nick?"

"The key that will unlock the cabinet of mystery.

CHAPTER IX.

NICK GUESSES THE SECRET.

Chick was dying with curiosity to hear what Nick had discovered, but he was wise enough not to expect a revelation on the street. Nick made no further reference to the subject until they were seated in the detective's den.

Before they reached it they had breakfast, and Nick transacted a little business at Zacary's jewelry store.

When they went into the store Zacary was absent, and a stranger was behind the counter.

"Where is Mr. Zacary?" asked Nick.

"He went out awhile ago and said he would be gone an hour. The hour will be up in fifteen minutes."

"You have taken Mr. Opping place, I suppose?" continued the detective.

"Yes. Then you have heard"—he paused and looked at Nick doubtfully.

"I have heard rumors," was the reply. "I am a detective and I have business with Mr. Zacary. By the way, at what hour did you begin work this morning?"

"At seven o'clock. I live near here, and last week applied for a position in this store. There was no vacancy, then, and no likelihood of one in the future. I was surprised, therefore when Mr. Zacary came to my room at five o'clock this morning and said he wanted me to take the place of his clerk, who had been arrested for robbery. My duties were to commence at once."

"I suppose when you arrived Mr. Zacary went out for breakfast," said the detective in a casual way.

The clerk showed some surprise at this question, but he answered readily: "No, he stayed a few minutes, gave me some instructions, and then went out in response to a telephone message."

"Was he gone long?"

"Half-an-hour."

"Came back alone, did he?"

"Yes." The clerk spoke shortly. He saw that he was being pumped, and, failing to understand the reason, was becoming indignant.

Nick noted the antagonistic expression on the young man's face and at once took measures to remove the cause.

He produced his card. The clerk read the name, and his countenance flushed with excitement born of pride and delight. "Pardon me," he said contritely, "I could not guess who you were. I shall feel honored if I can be of any assistance to you."

In his vast dealings with men, Nick had learned to read human nature like a book. He knew that the young man could be trusted.

Without exposing his hand he obtained the clerk's solemn promise not to divulge to any one the conversation that had taken or should take place between them.

"How long did Zacary remain in the store before going out again?" was the detective's next question.

"About an hour, I should say."

"Did he say where he was going?"

"Yes. He said he was going to the court to make complaint against Blunt and Opping."

Nick whispered a few words into Chick's ear.

Chick nodded and quickly left the store. He was gone five minutes, and returned with a shake of the head.

Nick Carter was looking at the jewels in the counter display when Benoni Zecary entered.

He gave a little start of surprise at seeing the detective, but shook hands smilingly.

"I haf zworn to a gomblaint against dose teefs," he announced, "and I'll brosegute them to der limit."

Nick said nothing. He had, at the night conference with the jeweler, expressed his belief in the innocence of the men in jail, and he did not feel that it was necessary to repeat his views.

But he said something which made the jeweler blink his eyes. "I'm up a stump, Mr. Zacary. Last night I said that I hoped soon to be able to inform you who committed the robbery. I am not so sure of my ground this morning. In fact, my lead, as the miners say, has 'petered out'."

Zacary's eyes sought the floor. He appeared to be grievously disappointed at the statement. Suddenly he looked up with a confident smile.

"Nefer you mint, Mr. Garter," he said quickly, "dere's alvays der tarkness before der tawn."

"What do you mean by that?" Nick's tone was mildly curious.

"I means dat I haf got der broof dat Plunt got der necklace. Misder Duane, der proker next toor, see me gif it to him in der bassagevay. He vill pe von of der main vitnesses at der examination and drial."

Nick called up a black frown. Zacary rubbed his hands in gleeful satisfaction. "I am somevat of a tetective mineselluf," he remarked.

"So you are," said Nick sourly. Then he added: "As you have done what I have failed to do, I may as well drop the case."

"No, no, don't do dat!" exclaimed Zacary. "I vant you to go to Ohio—Gleveland—dat's vere Plunt vas raised, and tig up his early history. Der zooner you gets avay der petter."

Nick appeared to consider the proposition.

"All right," he said at last, "I am with you. I can start to-morrow morning."

Zacary received this statement with every sign of pleasure. He shook hands with Nick, and when the two detectives went out followed them to the sidewalk.

"Chick," remarked the detective when they had gone a block, "business is booming."

"Your expression would seem to indicate that you have the long end," was the reply. Nick smiled.

Before turning from Broadway to go Fifth Avenue way the detective went into a telegraph office and sent a cable to Scotland Yard.

It was close upon noon when they reached Nick's residence. Patsy was up and anxiously awaiting them.

Nick's first move was to talk over the phone with Duane, the broker.

Afterward, when the three detectives were seated and and cigars were in evidence, Nick took the floor.

"I have a goodly budget," he began, "and I would have unloaded some of it before if proper opportunity had been presented. The case is an interesting one, and at the outset was involved in a perplexing mystery. It was sometime before I was able to separate the wheat from the chaff, and secure that which caused me to move in one undeviating course.

"When Blunt told his story in the Elizabeth jail, be-

fore I knew of the arrest of Lanky Doogan and Tommy Haste, I scented the plot, and therefore your telephone announcement that the two prisoners had secured nothing by the hold-up did not surprise me. If, as I supposed, the robbery of the jewels had been planned by a master craftsman, he would not have made a substitution of packages, have given warning of the proposed robbery without an object which could not contemplate the keeping of faith with Doogan and Haste. To make the matter plainer, he would not have concocted such a complicated scheme if he had not intended to sacrifice Doogan and Haste in order to divert suspicion from the real culprit.

"See how nicely it would have worked if I had not come in where I was not expected. Opping saw Zacary give the Bodwin jewels to Blunt. Then followed the hold-up in the Jersey hollow. But for my appearance, my notification to you, Chick, and your prompt, successful action, Doogan and Haste would probably have escaped, and the key to the plot would have been lost. The result might have been that the plotter would have been safe with his plunder, and Blunt might have remained months in jail, though he might never have been convicted.

"But my appearance on the scene, while it operated to alarm the plotter, was the means, at the same time, of making the case look darker for Blunt. He had gone from the store with the jewelry, the robbers had secured a dummy, and the original package had disappeared. I had, seemingly, put Blunt in a hole, and Crafty Solomon must have taken some comfort from his view of the circumstance.

"Now for the plot. I had made up my mind before I left Elizabeth that the robbery had been planned by some one intimately acquainted with the business, the ins and outs, of Zacary's store. Opping might be implicated, but I could come to no conclusion on that point. The adventure with the man with the sharp nose, whom I now know as Crafty Solomon, convinced me that I was on the right track.

"When I reached New York after my Elizabeth experiences, I had constructed a theory which was strengthened when I went to the jewelry store and had a talk with Benoni Zacary. I had scented a plot, but I had not expected its magnitude. I supposed that sixty thousand dollars totaled the value of the plunder. It was left to Zacary to inform me that the loss footed up three hundred thousand. This announcement, made for a purpose, and followed by the statement that unless the jewels were recovered Zacary would be forced to go into bankruptcy, had the effect of wonderfully clearing the air. It was as plain as a pikestaff that Crafty Solomon was the arch-conspirator, and that Zacary was a full-fledged partner."

"Gee!" said Patsy; "the ground is getting warm."

"It did not take me long to size up the jeweler. He is capable of any kind of villainy, but his is not the head to plan such an ingenious scheme as that which comprehended the theft of over a quarter of a million dollars' worth of precious stones. The plot was worked by a master of craft. Zacary, in debt, as I imagine, and on the verge of bankruptcy, unbosomed himself to Solomon, and Solomon cooked up the scheme to swindle the creditors and leave a small fortune to be divided between himself and the jeweler. The creditors, if they were shrewd, might suspect a fraud, but if the affair went through as planned, they would not have any valid grounds upon which to base a prosecution.

"But how were the initial details worked out? How was Blunt made to believe that he went from the store with the Bodwin jewels in his pocket? I believed that there was that in the store which would unravel the mystery, and investigation gave me the pointers I needed. You were with me, Chick, and you will remember that I spent some time in the office which Blunt used. In that office the Bodwin jewels were placed in the package It contained a wardrobe which has never been used. This wardrobe was a step from the table upon which the packing was done. Blunt told me that after he packed the jewels he was called into the other office by Zacary, who repeated and added to the instructions relative to the journey to Colonel Bodwin's residence. Here was the opportunity for Crafty Solomon, hiding in the wardrobe. The office used by Blunt has but one door—that which communicated with Zacary's office. Blunt, therefore, though in the other office, would have no fear regarding the safety of the jewels, for, to his mind, any one to enter the office where the jewels were would have to pass him and Zacary.

"Now, let us suppose that when Zacary called Blunt, Solomon peeped out of the wardrobe, saw that Blunt's back was turned, and then, softly slipping out, seized the package of jewels and put in its place a fac-simile in external appearance. Noting a cross on Blunt's package, he made a similar cross on the dummy package."

Nick, for the information of Patsy, related what Za-

cary had said about the necklace which he had borrowed from another firm, giving his note for the same and a bill of sale of his store as security. He then said:

"I did not ask Zacary why he did not place the necklace in the same package with the other jewels, because I did not want to excite his suspicion to an unnecessary extent. My opinion is that he feared to trust such a valuable prize out of his hands. Again, he may have feared that Blunt would refuse to take the necklace unless provided with safeguards that would spoil the projected hold-up. But the matter was smoothed over, Crafty Solomon, no doubt, suggesting a satisfactory alternative.

"How was this last trick worked, Nick?" questioned Chick. "Solomon played another part, didn't he?"

"Yes. And he must have been made up to represent Blunt; that is, as far as clothes go, and my opinion is that he was in the passageway with his back to the sidewalk when Zacary made a bluff of handing him the necklace. Duane, the broker outside, saw Zacary hand something to a man that looked like Blunt. He did not see the man's face. When the man came out upon the sidewalk Duane was looking in another direction. All this information I got over the phone a short time ago.

"Who is Crafty Solomon and how did Zacary form his acquaintance? I have some ideas on the subject which I am looking for Scotland Yard to verify. Zacary and he are old friends, there is no question about that. He is a professional criminal and a dangerous one. I believe he fled from England to escape arrest for some big job, and I believe, further, that when he appeared before Zacary a few weeks ago he was looking for a good place in which to hide.

"Zacary found the place, and he did not have far to go. The cellar answered the purpose to the queen's taste. I investigated the hole and discovered evidence, in the shape of meat and bread crumbs, that the cellar had been recently occupied. It is an admirable place for the handy operation of the preliminary details of such a scheme as that which Zacary and he carried out.

"So there you have it. Here is the outcome as planned: The enforcement of a bill of sale of property not worth more than twenty thousand dollars—I figured on the stock while looking at the display on the counters this morning—and the carrying away by two crafty swindlers of plunder worth three hundred thousand dollars. Had the plot worked as scheduled I don't think Zacary would have left New York. Now, my belief is, that he is making ready to flit. He hopes that he has thrown dust in my eyes, but as he knows I do not accept his manufactured opinion that Blunt and Opping are guilty, he will not feel safe until he has put thousands of miles between himself and New York. The arrest of Hughson, the miscue of last night, and the failure of the plan to sequester Blunt, will also make Crafty Solomon anxious to leave the city for some country where extradition cannot reach him. Probably they have planned to go together."

Nick paused to light a fresh cigar. Patsy, an eager light in his eyes, was about to make a remark when Chick said: "No, Solomon isn't at the crib in the White Mice neighborhood. Nick and I went there and found that he had gone."

Patsy's face sobered instantly. "So we have lost him," he said.

"I hope not," said Nick composedly. "He has escaped us for a time, but we may get him to-night. Why do I hope so? I will tell you. He knows that the New York detectives are after him with blood in their eyes on account of the attempted murder of the patrolman, Tom Terriss. He is seeking the safest hiding-place in the city. The East Side does not furnish it, and his sudden departure from a hole in the West Side shows that that locality does not appeal to him. This morning early he called up Zacary. In a short time Zacary, disguised, came to the lodging-house with a bundle which contained a disguise for Solomon. They left together. Where they went I do not know. I do know that Zacary returned alone to the store, and I also know from Chick's report that Solomon is not in hiding in Zacary's apartments over his store. What is the reasonable conclusion? It is this: That in a fresh disguise and in temporary quarters Solomon will wait until time and Zacary provide the opportunity for a departure for the hiding-place par excellence."

"And where is that? Have you guessed it?" asked Patsy.

"Yes. It is in the cellar under Zacary's store."

CHAPTER X.

A DESCENT AND A SURPRISE.

Chick slapped his thigh in hearty acquiescence. "The cellar, of course. The place of all places. And when do you expect him to come and take possession?"

"To-night. But he may come before that. If he does, we must know of it. Patsy, here's a job for you.

Zacary's store must be watched all afternoon. And the job will have to be done in a manner that will not excite suspicion in the mind of this crafty rascal, Solomon. Can you manage it, Patsy?"

The young detective fixed his eyes on the floor, and appeared to be thinking deeply. After a few moments, Nick watching him with a quiet smile the while, he raised his head and said:

"I can do the trick all right. Plain, ordinary piping won't do for a street like Broadway in the daytime. I've got a scheme which I think is a peacherino. On the side street just below Zacary's, a dago of my acquaintance, does a hand-cart stunt with apples, bananas, and oranges. I'll hire the layout for this afternoon, and, made up as a discredited representative of the Mafia, I'll stand in a position so I can see Zacary's joint, and spot every gazaba who goes into it. Of course, that scheme will take me to the corner where push-carts are not allowed, but, after I shall have whispered a few startling sentences into the ear of the cop on the beat, the freedom of the entire street will be mine."

Nick complimented Patsy on his ingenuity, and expressed strong approval of the plan.

The young detective lost no time in preparation for his detail. After he had gone Nick called up on the phone, one after another, the officers of the many steamship companies. This took some time, but the reward came when from the office of the line to New Orleans and southern ports came the reply that a man answering the description of Zacary had at noon engaged passage for two on the steamer booked to leave for New Orleans the next morning at six o'clock.

The great detective's face wore a satisfied expression when he left the phone and resumed his easy chair. "They have prepared a flit, Chick, just as I had programed," was his remark. "And now I am more than ever satisfied that Solomon will go to the cellar to-night."

"And if he doesn't go, and we find no one there or upstairs in Zacary's rooms, we can overhaul them at the steamer, eh?"

"You have got another think coming, Chick."

A blush overspread the face of the assistant. "I forgot, for the moment, that we are dealing with a master of craft. They don't mean to go on the steamer. The ticket buying was a blind."

"That's right."

"But they will slip out, all the same, minus any brass-band attachments. They will charter a yacht, probably, to take them to some out-of-the-way place."

"What is the matter with Honduras?"

"Good place. No extradition there."

"Suppose you make some inquiries among the owners of commercial yachts, Chick. Get back as soon as you can."

Nick did not leave his residence that afternoon.

Chick reported about five o'clock. A yacht had been chartered, destination Honduras, and the man who had transacted the business was Benoni Zacary. The yacht was to sail next forenoon, and the charterer, with a friend, was to come on board very early in the morning.

"This news is something like," said Nick. "Now we know where we stand."

At that moment the bell rang. Joseph, the detective's valet, went to the door and received a cablegram and the messenger's book. After Nick had signed for it, he opened the envelope and read quickly the words of the message.

"All is clear, now," he said to Chick. "This is from Scotland Yard in answer to an inquiry which I sent this afternoon. I will read it.

"'Crafty Solomon wanted here, diamond robbery. Real name Solomon Zacary. Has uncle somewhere United States. Arrest him and hold.'"

"Uncle and nephew, eh? No wonder they have been thick," was Chick's comment.

"Now that the cablegram has put things straight," said Nick Carter, "I'll say that the moment I gazed at Crafty Solomon's nose I suspected that a close relationship existed between him and the Broadway jeweler. The nose of each was made after the same pattern. And they have other points in common."

Nick and Chick were discussing the uncle and nephew when there came a call to the phone.

Patsy was the caller.

"An old man with long, white beard and sharp nose just went into Zacary's store. The clerk left the place about five minutes ago," was the report. "What must I do? It's coming on dark."

"Stay where you are until I come to you," was the command.

"It is now time to let the inspector in on this deal," said Nick to Chick. "I won't try to put him on by phone, because there is too long a story to tell, too many explanations to make. You must go to the inspector's office,

explain matters, and ask him to detail men to watch the yacht. Tell him I won't need any help to manage the store end, but as it is possible that I may not find Zacary and Solomon there it is essential that the yacht be watched so that the arrests can be made if the men succeed in reaching it. Don't lose any time and return, if you can, in an hour."

Chick was expeditious. He was back in the den with ten minutes to spare. To his surprise Nick was not there. But in his place was an old man with watery eyes, stoop shoulders, and a nervous manner.

"Zacary!" exclaimed the young detective, in wonderment. "How came you here, and where is Mr. Carter?"

"Misder Garter haf gone out to vind a nodary so I gan gif my deposition. I haf gongluded to elefate my hants. Der chig is up."

These words were uttered in a tone of poignant sorrow. Chick was not impressed. The look of astonishment left his face. He grinned.

"Nick," said he, "you beat the Dutch. The make-up is all right, and the voice is the voice of old Zacary. But one thing gave you away. Zacary has long finger nails, like a Chinese. Yours are Nick Carter's."

"I'll have to keep my hands out of the lime-light, then," said the disguised detective, with a laugh. "But, otherwise, you think I will do, eh?"

"You would deceive even Crafty Solomon."

"He is the man I shall try to deceive."

"What's the program?"

"The store is now closed for the night, and Zacary is probably in his up-stairs apartment. You will go to his room with Patsy at your heels, and when Zacary opens the door you must nab him. If you need help Patsy will furnish it. After you have settled the old rascal, sit down and wait for me. I won't be far away. I think you and Patsy can work the trick, but in the very improbable event of serious resistance, I will be ready to waltz in. I would go with you, but I don't want to run the chance of ruining my disguise. This nose is made of wax, and won't stand undue familiarity."

"I can handle Zacary alone," grunted Chick.

"I believe you, and I don't anticipate any trouble."

Chick went out, found Patsy, and unfolded Nick's plan.

Together they proceeded to the jewelry store.

The lights had been turned down, and there was no one inside.

Chick ascended the stairs and halted before the door of Zacary's reception-room. Some person, presumably the jeweler, was heard moving about inside.

Chick knocked. The sounds within ceased, and a voice called:

"Who's vos dere?"

"A messenger from Mr. Carter. It is important."

"He goes to Ohio in der mornings, ton't he?"

"Yes. The message has relation to the journey."

"All right. I opens der toor."

The key turned in the lock, and the door was opened.

Chick saw Zacary, saw also that the jeweler was alone, and then made a leap forward.

The jeweler dodged, and, retreating quickly to the wall, pressed a button. With the other hand he tried to draw a knife, but Chick was upon him before he could succeed in his evil purpose.

Patsy watched the struggle, so as to be ready when required to assist his companion. But Chick was able to manage the jeweler without help. In a short time Zacary found himself sitting on the floor, his wrists ornamented with a pair of steel bracelets.

The two detectives, well pleased with the outcome, found chairs and awaited the arrival of Nick Carter.

Fifteen minutes passed and no Nick.

An hour went by, and then Chick became uneasy.

"Something has happened that was not down on the program," he said to Patsy. "Suppose you go downstairs and investigate a bit."

Zacary, who up to this time had not opened his mouth, now said: "He vill vind der sdable toor open, and der horse gone avay."

Chick thought of the electric button on the wall which Zacary had pressed, and guessed the truth.

The quick return of Patsy in great excitement caused the jeweler to chuckle audibly.

"Vat did I dell you?" he said, with a malicious grin. "Some dings haf habbened, vot?"

"The store-door is open, the trap-door is raised, and there are two patrolmen in the store trying to figure out what has happened."

"I know what has happened," said Chick, casting a black look at Zacary. But"—he added with a gleam of hope in his eyes—"the battle is not yet lost."

"It bleasures me to veel dat you haf zuch a hopevul disbosition," remarked Zacary sneeringly. "You are vat dey gall obtomisdical, vot?"

Chick smiled, but did not reply.

He asked Patsy to go down-stairs again and request the policemen to come up.

On their arrival, Chick went over the points, said there was a clear case against Zacary, and turned his prisoner over to them.

The jeweler departed with the officers, a smile on his face. He believed that any prosecution which might be instituted against him would fall flat, for the reason that his nephew, Crafty Solomon, had the treasure, and, thanks to the warning given, Solomon had escaped.

After the clerk had gone, just before closing time, Solomon had appeared, and, as Nick Carter had foretold, had gone down into the cellar to spend the night. At his urgent request—he said he would be in less danger in the cellar than Zacary up-stairs in his room—the jeweler had placed all the plunder in his hands. Before they parted, with the understanding that they were to meet again just before daybreak, Zacary had thought of a means of warning in the event of an undesirable visit to his rooms. There was electrical communication between the store and the reception-room up-stairs. Solomon could have the trap-door of the cellar slightly raised, and, if he heard the bell ring, he could slip out and go to another place which, when the matter of concealment had been under consideration, had been regarded as second choice. Solomon had heard the bell, and had taken action accordingly.

And while Benoni Zacary tried to make himself feel easy in mind, where was Nick Carter?

CHAPTER XI.

THE NERVE OF NICK CARTER.

The great detective had not given Chick all the reasons for desiring to take no part in the arrest of Zacary.

Those he gave were good ones, but the controlling one was based on a dim fear that there was an unknown detail in the plans of the swindlers which might be used to overmatch him.

Therefore he resolved to watch the store while Chick and Patsy were operating up-stairs.

He had reason afterward to congratulate himself that he did so.

On his arrival at the corner near the store he spoke to a patrolman, who quickly moved away and took a position on the side street.

Nick, of course, was not in a position to hear the bell, but he saw the trap-door raise, the head of a man appear a moment, and then disappear. Something had occurred, and Nick, after rapid thinking, believed he knew what it was.

Crafty Solomon had been warned of impending danger.

With his picklock the detective effected an entrance into the store, and, hurrying to the traps, lifted the door, taking position as he did so, to prevent a possible murderous bullet from reaching his person.

But no bullet came. The cellar was lighted up, and, looking down, Nick saw that the small, grated window, which furnished light and ventilation, was open.

He was down the stairs in a twinkling. The cellar was empty.

Out through the window went Nick to come into a little court which was connected with the side street.

The fugitive must be in custody by this time, the detective thought, for it was near here that the patrolman had been stationed.

Nick was hastening forward when a yell of affright from a room, whose window opened on the side of one of the buildings abutting on the alley, caused him to look up quickly.

He saw that the window was open, that there was a fire-escape, and he heard some one say, "Shut up, I won't hurt you." The voice was Solomon's, and, following the words, a door slammed.

Nick Carter divined what had happened. Solomon had made for the passageway, but on entering it had seen the patrolman's back and had immediately retreated to try another means of escape.

As it must be the intention of the hard-pressed villain to get out of the building as soon as possible, Nick ran out, meeting the patrolman on his way, and finding a stairway, swiftly ascended it.

To the patrolman, who kept at the detective's heels, matters were rapidly explained.

Up-stairs there was the greatest confusion. It was a lodging-house, and the noise made by the fleeing criminal, the startling experiences that had befallen many of the roomers, and the prevailing belief that a lunatic had broken loose, had all combined to render women hysterical, and men bewildered and frightened.

A group surrounded Nick and the policeman when they reached the second floor, and it was some moments before the detective could get coherent answers to the questions asked.

At last a young married man, clad in a pink night-gown, a Tuxedo, and a lady's street hat, "hind side before," furnished the information that the lunatic had gone into a vacant room on the third floor, and had locked the door.

Nick and the patrolman went up another flight of stairs, and the room was pointed out.

The detective turned the knob of the door to have Solomon yell savagely: "Don't try to come in, for I have got a gun, and I'll shoot."

"This room has a window opening on the alley," said Nick, to the patrolman. "He may try to slip down the fire-escape and make for the store again. Go down and be ready for him in case he tries to get away in that fashion."

"There are probably many people in the alley watching the building. But I'll go down, and, while I'm down, I'll send in an urgency call to the station." With these words the officer hurried away.

"If you are a sensible man," Nick called to Solomon, "you will surrender. You haven't the ghost of a chance to get away. In half-an-hour the building will be surrounded by policemen and detectives. Open the door, then, and save trouble."

"It is Nick Carter, is it? I thought as much. And now I have all the more reason for threatening to shoot if that door is broken in. I have made up my mind to die, but, before I leave this abode of hard luck, I'll give you a pill that will take you along with me."

To this murderous resolve Nick made reply: "You are a fool, Solomon. Be a man, and take your medicine."

"I've half-a-mind to open the door and have it out with you right now," was the fierce outburst.

"I'll be ready for you," said Nick serenely.

But the door was not opened.

Two policemen came up the stairs and approached the detective.

Nick called them aside, and a short, whispered conversation took place. Then the detective walked softly to the stairs, and as softly went down them.

After he had gone one of the policemen began a nagging talk with Solomon.

The talk was going on, Solomon giving as good as was sent, when Nick Carter grasped the rungs of the fire-escape in the alley and began an ascent.

His design was evident. While Crafty Solomon's attention was being given to the talk of the policeman, Nick would appear at the window, which was raised, and cover the villain before he could turn his head.

The plan worked, but not exactly as Nick had hoped.

Solomon was shaking his fist at the door and cursing the smiling officer outside when a stern voice from the window made him start and become as pale as death.

"Don't move, or you are a dead man! I have got you foul."

The ordinary criminal would have obeyed the command. But the nephew of Benoni Zacary was not an ordinary criminal. He hesitated one brief moment, and then wheeled as quick as a flash and raised a hand which held a revolver.

But he never fired. If he was quick, Nick Carter was quicker. There was one report, and the pistol flew from the hands of the would-be murderer. The next instant the detective was in the room with his fingers about Crafty Solomon's throat.

There was a brief struggle. The plucky villain was strong, and he fought for all he was worth. But he was no match for Sandow's great unprofessional rival. When the door was broken in Solomon lay on the floor, and Nick Carter, grimly smiling, sat on the villain's chest.

The prisoner was taken to police headquarters and searched. All the missing jewels were found on his person.

Benoni Zacary was brought in shortly afterward, and the two swindlers, convinced that Nick Carter had them "dead to rights," made a full confession.

While Zacary was making his, he told Nick that he was responsible for the telegraphic despatch signed "Chick," which Nick had received in Elizabeth. He had seen Chick—for, after receiving his chief's orders, the young detective had called on the jeweler—and, fearing that Nick might get on the right track while in Elizabeth, had determined to lure him to New York, and then trust to luck in the matter of turning him in a false direction.

Zacary would never have gone into the swindle but for the promptings of Solomon. This expert in craft, fleeing from London, had sought his uncle and had been sheltered. They had many talks, and, in one of them, Zacary bewailed his bad luck in business. Times were hard, his stock had run down, debts were accumulating, and he had half a notion to go into bankrupcty, clean up, and start over again in some other city.

Solomon listened, reflected, and finally suggested a

swindle which had reference only to the necklace. The plans were worked out about the time Colonel Bodwin came into the store and contracted for the purchase of the jewels as a present to his daughter. A new, and as it seemed, a better scheme was now suggested to the cunning brain of the nephew. Bill Hughson had already been engaged, and he was immediately posted in the details of the new arrangement. Primed by Solomon, Hughson looked up two guns who should act as useful pawns in the game to be played. These were found in Lanky Doogan and Tommy Haste.

It was the original intention to make the officers and the public believe that the jewels had been stolen by the two guns. Blunt was to be held in reserve. In case of a flaw in the Doogan-Haste scheme, the confidential agent was to be put into the hole.

Crafty Solomon was a very active man on the day of the hold-up. His first move was to go to a Bowery resort and phone Blunt that a robbery of the jewels had been planned. When he left the phone he was easy in mind, for he felt sure that his Elizabeth story had completely deceived the confidential agent, and that the hollow hold-up would take place without a hitch.

While Blunt was out that morning Solomon entered the cellar by way of the window. He sported a suit of clothes of the color and cut of those worn by Blunt, and, raising the trap-door slightly, signaled to Zacary who was outside of the little office waiting for the nephew's appearance.

Zacary sent Opping out on an errand, and, as soon as the clerk had gone, Solomon slipped out of the cellar and concealed himself in the wardrobe. Nick Carter had correctly stated what happened afterward.

When morning came Austin Blunt and Julius Opping were released from jail. They fairly overwhelmed Nick in congratulations over his marvelously quick and successful work.

Their story gained them such strong sympathizers among the wholesale men that eventually this sympathy took practical form. To-day Blunt & Opping conduct the jewelry business formerly in the hands of Benoni Zacary.

Each of the two swindlers, when brought to trial, pleaded guilty. On account of his age Zacary got off with a ten-years' sentence. Solomon received the limit—twenty years.

Nick, Chick, and Patsy met at headquarters just after the confessions had been made. They had much to say to each other, and adjourned for talk and refreshment to a Fourth Avenue restaurant.

With them went the patrolman who had watched the alley, and who had followed Nick into the building where Crafty Solomon had taken refuge.

After the great detective, for the benefit of his assistants, had told the story of the flight of Solomon from the cellar and his capture in the lodging-house, the patrolman remarked: "Nick, you are the limit."

"And what's the limit?" asked the detective innocently.

"Nerve."

THE END.

The next issue, No. 474, will be "Nick Carter's Terrible Experience; or, The Cruise of the Limited Sleeper." Ready next week.

About the Early Numbers of

Tip Top Weekly

We receive hundreds of letters every week from readers asking if we can supply the early numbers of Tip Top containing Frank's adventures. In every case we are obliged to reply that numbers 1 to 300 are entirely out of print.

We would like to call the attention of our readers to the fact that the Frank Merriwell Stories now being published in book form in the Medal Library are inclusive of these early numbers. The first book to appear was No. 150 entitled "Frank Merriwell's Schooldays."

We give herewith a complete list of all the stories that have been published in book form up to the time of writing. We will be glad to send a fine colored cover catalogue of the Medal Library which is just filled with good things for boys, upon receipt of a one-cent stamp to cover postage.

The Price of The Merriwell Books is Ten Cents per Copy. At all Newsdealers

Frank Merriwell at Yale.	Medal No. 205.	10c.
Frank Merriwell Down South.	Medal No. 189.	10c.
Frank Merriwell in Camp.	Medal No. 253.	10c.
Frank Merriwell in England.	Medal No. 340.	10c.
Frank Merriwell in Europe.	Medal No. 291.	10c.
Frank Merriwell in Japan.	Medal No. 276.	10c.
Frank Merriwell on the Road.	Medal No. 366.	10c.
Frank Merriwell's Athletes.	Medal No. 301.	10c.
Frank Merriwell's Bicycle Tour.	Medal No. 217.	10c.
Frank Merriwell's Book of Physical Development. Diamond Hand-Book	No. 6.	10c.
Frank Merriwell's Bravery.	Medal No. 193.	10c.
Frank Merriwell's Champions.	Medal No. 240.	10c.
Frank Merriwell's Chase.	Medal No. 271.	10c.
Frank Merriwell's Chums.	Medal No. 167.	10c.
Frank Merriwell's College Chums.	Medal No. 312.	10c.
Frank Merriwell's Courage.	Medal No. 225.	10c.
Frank Merriwell's Cruise.	Medal No. 287.	10c.
Frank Merriwell's Danger.	Medal No. 281.	10c.
Frank Merriwell's Daring.	Medal No. 203.	10c.
Frank Merriwell's Fame.	Medal No. 308.	10c.
Frank Merriwell's First Job.	Medal No. 284.	10c.
Frank Merriwell's Foes.	Medal No. 176.	10c.
Frank Merriwell's Fortune.	Medal No. 320.	10c.
Frank Merriwell's Gallant Scheme.	Medal No. 197.	10c.
Frank Merriwell's Hard Luck.	Medal No. 292.	10c.
Frank Merriwell's Hunting Tour.	Medal No. 197.	10c.
Frank Merriwell's Loyalty.	Medal No. 147.	10c.
Frank Merriwell's New Comedian.	Medal No. 324.	10c.
Frank Merriwell's Opportunity.	Medal No. 298.	10c.
Frank Merriwell's Own Company.	Medal No. 304.	10c.
Frank Merriwell's Problem.	Medal No. 316.	10c.
Frank Merriwell's Prosperity.	Medal No. 268.	10c.
Frank Merriwell's Protege.	Medal No. 296.	10c.
Frank Merriwell's Race.	Medal No. 182.	10c.
Frank Merriwell's Return to Yale.	Medal No. 244.	10c.
Frank Merriwell's School-Days.	Medal No. 154.	10c.
Frank Merriwell's Secret.	Medal No. 247.	10c.
Frank Merriwell's Skill.	Medal No. 237.	10c.
Frank Merriwell's Sports Afield.	Medal No. 263.	10c.
Frank Merriwell's Stage Hit.	Medal No. 372.	10c.
Frank Merriwell's Struggle.	Medal No. 230.	10c.
Frank Merriwell's Trip West.	Medal No. 184.	10c.
Frank Merriwell's Vacation.	Medal No. 202.	10c.

Rough Rider Weekly

51—The Young Rough Rider's Bitterest Foe; or, The Challenge of Capt. Nemo.
52—The Young Rough Rider's Great Play; or, The Mad Ally of a Villain.
53—The Young Rough Rider Trapped; or, A Villain's Desperate Play.
54—The Young Rough Rider's Still-Hunt; or, The Mystery of Dead Man's Pass.
55—The Young Rough Rider's Close Call; or, The Girl From Denver.
56—The Young Rough Rider's Long Ride; or, Life Against Life.
57—The Young Rough Rider's Silent Foe; or, The Hermit of Satan's Gulch.
58—The Young Rough Rider's River Route; or, A Fight Against Great Odds.
59—The Young Rough Rider's Investment; or, A Bargain With a Ghost.
60—The Young Rough Rider's Pledge; or, The Hermit of Hidden Haunt.
61—The Young Rough Rider's Aërial Voyage; or, The Stranded Circus.
62—Ted Strong's Nebraska Ranch; or, The Fracas at Fullerton.
63—Ted Strong's Treasure Hunt; or, The Demons of Coahuila.
64—Ted Strong's Terrible Test; or, Joining a Secret Clan.
65—The Young Rough Riders in Shakerag Canyon; or, Routing the Rustlers of the Big Horn.
66—Ted Strong's Secret Service; or, The Mystic Letter.
67—Ted Strong's Decisive Tactics; or, The Man with the Evil Eye.
68—Ted Strong's Troublesome Neighbors; or, The Feud in Texas.
69—Ted Strong's Dusky Friend; or, The Gypsy Girl's Warning.
70—The Young Rough Riders in Panama; or, An Unpremeditated Voyage.
71—Ted Strong's Fearless Stand; or, The Young Rough Riders in Arizona.
72—Ted Strong's Tight Squeeze; or, The Arizona Clean Up.
73—Ted Strong's Celestial Foe; or, A Big Show Down in Pacos.
74—Ted Strong's Luck; or, The Deed to Moon Valley.
75—Ted Strong's Generosity; or, The Mystery of the Blue Butterfly.
76—Ted Strong's Air Ship; or, Dueling in the Clouds.
77—Ted Strong's Wild West Show; or, The Making of an Indian Chief.
78—Ted Strong's Commission; or, Going After Government Gold.
79—Ted Strong, King of the Wild West; or, Winning a Town by a Ride.
80—King of the Wild West's Camel Hunt; or, Young Rough Riders in the Mojave Desert.
81—King of the Wild West and the "Bad Men"; or, Putting a "Lid" on the Territory.
82—King of the Wild West on Guard; or, In the Cause of the Governor's Son.
83—King of the Wild West's "Bounties"; or, The Young Wolf Hunters of Montana.
84—King of the Wild West's Sapphire Mines; or, The Smugglers of Yogo Creek.
85—King of Wild West's Crooked Trail; or, A Trip into Old Mexico.
86—King of Wild West's Human Map; or, The Treasure of the Magic Cave Trail.
87—King of the Wild West in the Corral; or, Teaching the Law to Custer, the Wild Horse.
88—King of the Wild West's Dangerous Game; or, The Win-Out in Idaho.
89—King of the Wild West's Strange Find; or, The Lost City of the Sangre de Christo.
90—King of the Wild West's Militia; or, Breaking the Strike in Leadville.
91—King of the Wild West's Justice; or, The Sheep War of the Las Animas.
92—King of the Wild West's Saint; or, The End of Polygamy in Utah.
93—King of the Wild West's Hold; or, Capturing the Big Timber Thieves.
94—King of the Wild West's Submarine; or, The Search for Sunken Treasure.
95—King of the Wild West's Finish; or, The Great Stone Door.
96—King of the Wild West's Peril; or, The Cannibals of Tiburon Island.
97—King of the Wild West's Strange Quest; or, The White Princess of Sonora.

All of the above numbers always on hand. If you cannot get them from your newsdealer, five cents per copy will bring them to you by mail, postpaid.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, 79-89 Seventh Ave., NEW YORK

BUFFALO BILL STORIES

Containing the Most Thrilling Adventures of the Celebrated Government Scout "BUFFALO BILL" (Hon. William F. Cody)

207—Buffalo Bill's Last Bullet; or, Solving the Mystery of Robber's Rock.
208—Buffalo Bill's Deadliest Peril; or, The Pursuit of Black Barnett, the Outlaw.
209—Buffalo Bill's Great Knife Duel; or, The White Queen of the Sioux.
210—Buffalo Bill's Blind Lead; or, The Treasure of the Commander.
211—Buffalo Bill's Sacrifice; or, For a Woman's Sake.
212—Buffalo Bill's 'Frisco Feud; or, California Joe to the Rescue.
213—Buffalo Bill's Diamond Hunt; or, The King of Bonanza Gulch.
214—Buffalo Bill's Avenging Hand; or, Lariat Larry's Last Throw.
215—Buffalo Bill's Mormon Quarrel; or, At War with the Danites.
216—Buffalo Bill's Deadshot Pard; or, The Evil Spirit of the Plains.
217—Buffalo Bill's Cheyenne Comrades; or, The Brand of the Death Brotherhood.
218—Buffalo Bill's Fiery Trail; or, Lone Bear's Paleface Pard.
219—Buffalo Bill's Sioux Foes; or, The Noosing of Big Elk.
220—Buffalo Bill's Cold Trail; or, The Medicine Woman of the Apaches.
221—Buffalo Bill's Iron Fist; or, The Tiger of the Kiowas.
222—Buffalo Bill's Race with Fire; or, Saving His Enemies.
223—Buffalo Bill's Florida Foes; or, Hunting Down the Seminoles.
224—Buffalo Bill's Grim Climb; or, Fighting Indians in Mexico.
225—Buffalo Bill's Red Enemy; or, The Wizard of the Comanches.
226—Buffalo Bill on a Traitor's Track; or, The White Chief of the Crows.
227—Buffalo Bill's Last Bullet; or, Red Cloud's Smoke Signal.
228—Buffalo Bill's Air Voyage; or, Fighting Redskins from a Balloon.
229—Buffalo Bill's Death Thrust; or, Snake Eye's Silent Doom.
230—Buffalo Bill's Kiowa Foe; or, Buckskin Sam's Red Hand.
231—Buffalo Bill's Terrible Throw; or, The Strong Arm of the Border King.
232—Buffalo Bill's Wyoming Trail; or, Wild Work with the Redskins.
233—Buffalo Bill's Dakota Peril; or, Wild Bill's Death Feud.
234—Buffalo Bill's Tomahawk Duel; or, Playing Redskins at Their Own Game.
235—Buffalo Bill's Apache Round-Up; or, The Redskin Renegade.
236—Buffalo Bill's El Paso Pard; or, The Red Whirlwind of Texas.
237—Buffalo Bill on the Staked Plain; or, Lance, Lasso and Rifle.
238—Buffalo Bill's Border Raid; or, Fighting Redskins and Renegades.
239—Buffalo Bill's Bravest Fight; or, Star Eye, the Pawnee Princess.
240—Buffalo Bill's Heathen Pard; or, Lung Hi on the War Path.
241—Buffalo Bill's Dakota Dare-devils; or, Routing the Redskins.
242—Buffalo Bill's Arapahoe Alliance; or, Fighting the Tejons.
243—Buffalo Bill on Special Service; or, The Death Dance of the Apaches.
244—Buffalo Bill on a Treasure Hunt; or, The Secret Hoard of the Vaquis.
245—Buffalo Bill's Lost Quarry; or, Following a Cold Trail.
246—Buffalo Bill Among the Comanches; or, Loud Thunder's Last Ride.
247—Buffalo Bill's Stockade Siege; or, Holding the Fort.
248—Buffalo Bill's Creek Quarrel; or, Long Hair's Long Shot.
249—Buffalo Bill Among the Pawnees; or, Nick Wharton's Redskin Chum.
250—Buffalo Bill on a Long Hunt; or, The Tracking of Arrowhead.
251—Buffalo Bill's Wyoming Trail; or, The Conquering of Red Hand.

All of the above numbers always on hand. If you cannot get them from your newsdealer, five cents per copy will bring them to you by mail, postpaid.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, 79-89 Seventh Ave., NEW YORK

DIAMOND DICK WEEKLY

Containing the Most Unique and Fascinating Tales of Western Romance.

440—Diamond Dick, Jr., and the Fire Bugs; or, The Ten-Strike at Lallakoo.
441—Handsome Harry's Iron Hand; or, Solving a Great Diamond Mystery.
442—Handsome Harry's Treasure Hunt; or, Three Old Tramps from Tough Luck.
443—Handsome Harry's Steel Trap; or, A Running Fight in the Rockies.
444—Handsome Harry with a Hard Crowd; or, A Blow-up on the Mississippi.
445—Handsome Harry's Big Round-up; or, The Beauty of Chimney Butte.
446—Handsome Harry in the Big Range; or, Hey, Rube, in Arizona.
447—Diamond Dick's Ghostly Trail; or, The Phantom Engine of Pueblo.
448—Diamond Dick's Boy Hunt; or, The Kidnapers of the Sierras.
449—Diamond Dick's Sure Throw; or, The Broncho Buster's Last Ride.
450—Diamond Dick's Fight for Honor; or, The Wizard Gambler.
451—Diamond Dick Afloat; or, The Pirates of the Pacific.
452—Diamond Dick's Steeple Chase; or, The Leap That Won the Race.
453—Diamond Dick's Deadly Peril; or, A Fight for Life in the Rapids.
454—Diamond Dick's Black Hazard; or, The Feud at Roaring Water.
455—Diamond Dick's Darkest Trail; or, The Secret of the Haunted Mine.
456—Diamond Dick's Desperate Dash; or, A Rough Ride through Montana.
457—Diamond Dick's Secret Foe; or, Nightwolf, the Red Terror.
458—Diamond Dick's Center Shot; or, A Hoorah at the Golden Gate.
459—Diamond Dick's Blind Lead; or, The Rustlers of Sandy Gulch.
460—Diamond Dick's Cool Thrust; or, The Trail of The Silent Three.
461—Diamond Dick's Swiftest Ride; or, Won by the Pony Express.
462—Diamond Dick in the Desert; or, The Shot-Gun Messenger from Fargo.
463—Diamond Dick's Deadliest Foe; or, A Fight with a Destroying Angel.
464—Diamond Dick's Death Seal; or, The Beautiful Bride of Salt Lake.
465—Diamond Dick's Riot Call; or, A Bad Man's Oath of Vengeance.
466—Diamond Dick in the Klondike; or, The Crazy Cresus of the Yukon.
467—Diamond Dick's Call to Time; or, The Mystery of Chilkoot Pass.
468—Diamond Dick's Golden Trail; or, The Bad Man from Forty Mile.
469—Diamond Dick on the Warpath; or, A Brush with Yaquis in Arizona.
470—Diamond Dick's Red Signal; or, The Robbers of the Roundhouse.
471—Diamond Dick and the Coiners; or, Shoving a Queer Gang.
472—Diamond Dick's Boy Pard; or, The Trail of the Black Ring.
473—Diamond Dick's Double; or, The Lone Bandit of the Sierras.
474—Diamond Dick's Silver Star; or, Cleaning Up a Bad Town.
475—Diamond Dick on the Fire Line; or, The Boys in Red at Lame Dog.
476—Diamond Dick's Hold-up; or, The Raid on Robbers' Roost.
477—Diamond Dick on the Fire-Line; or, The Boys in Red at Lame Dog.
478—Diamond Dick's Defiance; or, The Midnight Message from Redstone.
479—Diamond Dick's Secret Pledge; or, The Mysterious Man of Bar T.
480—Diamond Dick's Yellow Peril; or, Probing an Underground Secret.
481—Diamond Dick's Border Raid; or, Holding Back the Highbinders.
482—Diamond Dick's Bold Stand; or, Taking the Odds for Justice.
483—Diamond Dick on a Queer Trail; or, The Hermit of Bitter Roost.
484—Diamond Dick in the Frozen North; or, The Ice King of Old Winnepeg.

All of the above numbers always on hand. If you cannot get them from your newsdealer, five cents per copy will bring them to you by mail, postpaid.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, 79-89 Seventh Ave., NEW YORK

Nick Carter Weekly

THE BEST DETECTIVE STORIES IN THE WORLD

434—The Cruise of the Shadow; or, Nick Carter's Ocean Chase.
435—A Prince of Impostors; or, Nick Carter's Clever Foil.
436—The Mystery of John Dashwood; or, Nick Carter and the Wharf Secret.
437—Following a Blind Trail; or, The Detective's Best Guess.
438—The Crime of the Potomac; or, The Telltale Finger Marks.
439—In the Shadow of Death; or, Nick Carter's Saving Hand.
440—The Fear-Haunted Broker; or, Nick Carter's Great Lone-Handed Battle.
441—The Greenhouse Tragedy; or, The Stab Wound in the Dark.
442—A Clever Grab; or, Nick Carter's Worst Worry.
443—The Mystery of the Front Room; or, Nick Carter's Marvelous Work.
444—The Crime of Union Square; or, Nick Carter's Ten Deductions.
445—A Millionaire Criminal; or, Nick Carter's Great Enigma.
446—The Broadway Cross; or, The Little Giant's Day of Fate.
447—The Princess Possess; or, Nick Carter's Beautiful Foe.
448—The Quexel Tragedy; or, Nick Carter's Midnight Message.
449—The Curse of the Quexels; or, The Ghost of a Murdered Beauty.
450—Missing: a Sack of Gold; or, The Express Office Mystery.
451—The Great Cathedral Mystery; or, Nick Carter's Complicated Case.
452—A Play for a Million; or, Nick Carter's Beautiful Adversary.
453—The Pear-Shaped Diamonds; or, Nick Carter's Most Delicate Task.
454—The Great Orloff Ruby; or, Nick Carter and the Demon's Eye.
455—Nick Carter's Human Weapon; or, The Woman with the Branded Face.
456—The Compact of Death; or, Nick Carter's Singed Hair Clew.
457—The Rajah's Revenge; or, Nick Carter's Bold Attack.
458—A Tragedy of the Sea; or, Nick Carter's Desperate Fight.
459—The Jiu-Jitsu Puzzle; or, Nick Carter's Athletic Enemy.
460—Kairo the Strong; or, Ten Ichi and the Human Cyclone.
461—Nick Carter's Strange Power; or, The Great Jewel Scandal.
462—Nick Carter and the Marixburg Affair; or, Foiling a Great Conspiracy.
463—The Millionaire Cracksman; or, Nick Carter's Mascot Case.
464—The Mystery Man; or, Nick Carter's Smartest Opponent.
465—Scylla the Sea Robber; or, Nick Carter and the Queen of Sirens.
466—The Beautiful Pirate of Oyster Bay; or, Nick Carter's Strangest Adventure.
467—The Man from Nevada; or, Nick Carter's Cowboy Client.
468—Maguey, the Mexican; or, Nick Carter's Battle with Bloodhounds.
469—Pedro, the Dog Detective; or, Nick Carter's Four-Footed Assistant.
470—The Automobile Fiend; or, Nick Carter's Motor-Car Case.
471—Bellini, the Black Hand; or, Nick Carter Among the Terrorists.
472—The Black Hand's Nemesis; or, One Against a Hundred and One.
473—An Expert in Craft; or, Nick Carter and the Jewel Thieves.
474—Nick Carter's Terrible Experience; or, The Crime of the Limited Sleeper.
475—The Mystery of an Untold Crime; or, Nick Carter's Marvelous Skill.
476—Diana, the Arch-Demon; or, Nick Carter's Run of Luck.
477—Captain Satan, the Unknown; or, Nick Carter's Great Mistake.
478—A Wizard of the Highway; or, Nick Carter's Test of Faith.
479—Abducted in Broad Day; or, Nick Carter's Duplicate Prisoner.
480—The Tong of the Tailless Dragon; or, Nick Carter's Close Shave.
481—The Padlocked Mystery; or, Nick Carter and the Death Plot Trap.

All of the above numbers always on hand. If you cannot get them from your newsdealer, five cents per copy will bring them to you by mail, postpaid.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, 79-89 Seventh Ave., NEW YORK

THE FAVORITE LIST
OF FIVE-CENT LIBRARIES

NICK CARTER WEEKLY

We know, boys, that there is no need of introducing to you Nicholas Carter, the greatest sleuth that ever lived. Every number containing the adventures of Nick Carter has a peculiar, but delightful, power of fascination.

TIP TOP WEEKLY

Frank and Dick Merriwell are two brothers whose adventures in college and on the athletic field are of intense interest to the American boy of to-day. They prove that a boy does not have to be a rowdy to have exciting sport.

DIAMOND DICK WEEKLY

The demand for stirring stories of Western adventure is admirably filled by this library. Every up-to-date boy ought to read just how law and order are established and maintained on our Western plains by Diamond Dick, Bertie, and Handsome Harry.

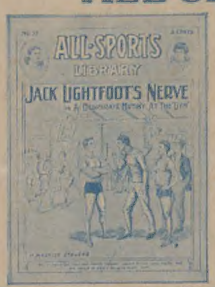
BUFFALO BILL STORIES

Buffalo Bill is the hero of a thousand exciting adventures among the Redskins. These are given to our boys only in the Buffalo Bill Stories. They are bound to interest and please you.

PAUL JONES WEEKLY

Do not think for a second, boys, that these stories are a lot of musty history, just sugar-coated. They are all new tales of exciting adventure on land and sea, in all of which boys of your own age took part.

ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY



All sports that boys are interested in, are carefully dealt with in the All-Sports Library. The stories deal with the adventures of plucky lads while indulging in healthy pastimes.

ROUGH RIDER WEEKLY

Ted Strong was appointed deputy marshal by accident, but he resolves to use his authority and rid his ranch of some very tough bullies. He does it in such a slick way that everyone calls him "King of the Wild West" and he certainly deserves his title.

BRAVE AND BOLD

Every boy who prefers variety in his reading matter, ought to be a reader of Brave and Bold. All these were written by authors who are past masters in the art of telling boys' stories. Every tale is complete in itself.

BOWERY BOY LIBRARY

The adventures of a poor waif whose only name is "Bowery Billy." Billy is the true product of the streets of New York. No boy can read the tales of his trials without imbibing some of that resource and courage that makes the character of this homeless boy stand out so prominently.